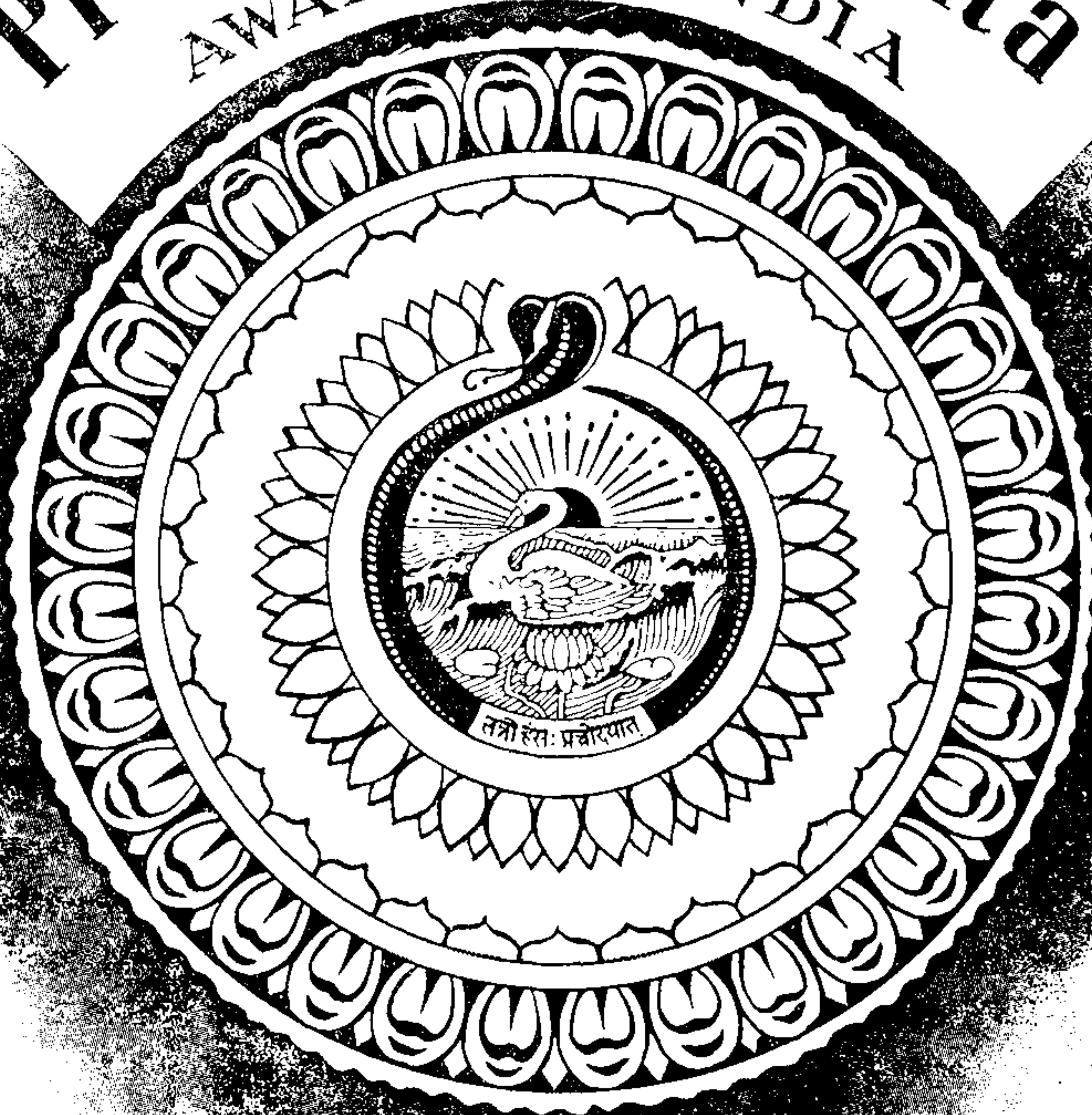


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Prabuddha Bharata

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Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

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RAMAKRISHNA ORDER

APRIL 1987

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Prabuddha Bharata

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No. 4

Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

ETERNAL VOICE OF INDIA

Vidyayā vindate amṛtam

'Immortality is attained through Self-knowledge'

The preferable and the pleasurable approach mankind. The man of intelligence, having considered them, separates the two. The intelligent one selects the preferable (of higher spiritual ideals) in preference to the pleasurable; the non-intelligent one selects the pleasurable for the sake of growth and protection (of the body etc.).

This Self cannot be known through much study, nor through the intellect, nor through much hearing. It can be known through the Self alone that the aspirant prays to; this Self reveals Its true nature to the seeker.

The Self that is subtler than the subtle and greater than the great is lodged in the heart of (every) creature. A desireless man sees that glory of the Self through the serenity of the organs, and (thereby he becomes) free from sorrow.

Arise, awake, and learn by approaching the excellent ones. The wise ones describe that path to be as inaccessible as a razor's edge, which when sharpened, is difficult to tread on.

The self-existent Lord destroyed man by his outgoing senses. Therefore one sees the outer things and not the inner Self. The (rare) discriminating man, desiring for immortality, turns his eyes inward and then sees the indwelling Self.

Kaṭha Upaniṣad

(1.2.2, 1.2.23, 1.2.20, 1.3.14, 2.1.1)

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

This month's EDITORIAL is based on a trip made by the Joint Editor of this journal to the places associated with Swami Vivekananda's visit to Almora, and its adjoining areas.

IN SRI RAMAKRISHNA : THE ESTABLISHER OF DHARMA Swami Satyarupananda of the Ramakrishna Mission, Samaj Sevak Sikshamandira, Belur Math, dwells on *dharmaglāni* and how Sri Ramakrishna established Dharma in modern times.

Dr. M. Lakshmikumari, President of the Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari, and an ardent Vivekanandist, discusses in SCIENCE AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT how Vedanta philosophy as interpreted by Vivekananda, is the most rational way to develop our higher potentialities and innate perfection.

A PILGRIMAGE TO MT. LOWE by Brahma-charini Bhavani of Vedanta Society, Hollywood, is a short note based on a trip made by the devotees and monks of the Hollywood Centre to this mountain.

ALMORA: ALONG THE FOOTPRINTS OF THE HIMALAYAN MONK

(EDITORIAL)

On a sunny winter morning of late December we were climbing up the same mountains of Almora that the wandering monk Vivekananda had climbed 94 years before, in 1890. Mad after a great realization, he came, like a 'God intoxicated beggar of the East,'¹ in these caves of Kasar Devi, a Mother's temple on the top of the highest mountain range of Almora. In the golden sunlight peeping through the branches of magnificent pines and crowding Rhododendrons we were walking on the same footprints of the Himalayan monk, Vivekananda.

It was in 1890. Since last one year the caged lion was struggling to unloose his fetters. His biggest bondage was the host of silent faces, the literally starving and the half-naked children of his master. They now gathered round him, in whom they

felt the new presence of their departed teacher. On the other hand, the 'great mission' of his master was tormenting his mind. He could not see the mission in all its clarity. Yet he was vaguely aware of its vast immensity. And with this awareness came an acute realization of the paucity of his own power. To fulfil such a mission one required a colossal accumulation of spiritual energy. And this could be achieved only by a life of intense renunciation and austerities. Torn in this dichotomy he wrote, 'I am longing for a flight to the Himalayas'.² The few visits to Pavhari Baba finally left him disappointed. He must do it all himself. There was none to share his visions. 'I have my plans for the future and they shall be a secret',³ he said. Only one ideal stood before him—Śuka.

1. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta: Sister Nivedita Girls' School, 1972) Vol. 1, p. 33.

2. Eastern and Western Disciples, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979) Vol. 1, p. 241.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 241.

A few months earlier he wrote, 'Alas for the irony of fate that in this land of Bhagavan Shuka's birth, renunciation 'is looked down upon as madness and sin'. He must go to the Himalayas and reach Suka's transcendence. A couple of months before, while at Rishikesh he was determined to visit Kedarnath and Badrinath. But his first disciple Sadananda's health failed. In desperation Vivekananda left him, and started walking on his way to the upper Himalayas. But soon he returned. He had to.

The monk in him now spoke out to the disciple: 'You have really become like a chain round my feet. I had gone a long way, but then I remembered that you were alone here and were such a fool. I could not be sure what you might do. Look, it was for you I had to return'.⁴

Desperate struggle succeeded. Vivekananda finally decided to set out for the Himalayas. He allowed only one to accompany him, his adventurous brother disciple, Akhandananda. 'You are my man. You have faith! Come, let's be off together',⁵ he said. Before starting, the intrepid heart, however strong, trembled! Who knows when the success would come! Is failure an impossibility? For a final blessing he rushed to Holy Mother, in whom he found the power of Ramakrishna, and of Ramakrishna's Divine Mother. 'Mother', he said, 'I shall not return until I have attained the highest Jnana.' Mother blessed him in the name of the Master. When she asked him to see his own mother before this great departure, the dedicated one answered: 'Mother, you alone are my Mother'. He hardly knew what cosmic power would now be protecting and guiding him in a thousand ways. In the height of his spirit, to his brother disciples he held up his great dream, 'I shall not return until

I acquire such realization that my very touch will transform a man.'⁶

Within a few days he set out for Almora along with Akhandananda. An intense desire for total renunciation consumed him. He had now nothing with him except a walking stick, a piece of cloth, a rag and two small books, the Gita and the Imitation of Christ, his unfailing companions for these days. He dispossessed himself of everything except a burning desire for God's grace. The guiding principle during these days, as he said afterwards, was the favourite incantation of Buddha, 'Even as the lion not trembling at noises, even as the wind not caught in a net, even as the lotus-leaf untouched by water, so do thou wander alone, like the rhinoceros.' His constant refrain were the lines from the Imitation of Christ, 'Silence, all ye teachers! And silence, ye prophets! Speak Thou alone O Lord, unto my soul.'⁷

* * * * *

From the moment he started walking from Kathgodam towards Almora, the Himalayan sublimity slowly began to engulf him. His naturally meditative mind began to see new horizons. The first great spiritual experience came at a quiet confluence of two hilly rivers, some twenty miles below Almora. It was at a quiet riverside village, Kankrighat.

On a winter afternoon we reached this village, Kankrighat. With difficulty we crossed on foot the hilly river Kosi. Some of us had even lost balance on the mossy stones and slipped into the knee-deep ice-cold water flowing down with a frightening speed. Finally, we reached the hallowed place. It was a tiny spot, a bowl-like triangle covered on three sides by high mountains. The river Kosi, meets the river Shrota (or Sirota) after creating a small

6. Ibid., pp. 241-42.

7. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 58.

4. Ibid., p. 224.

5. Ibid., p. 241.

island in the confluence, where a huge peepal tree with outspreading roots and branches stood like a giant shelter. Below the tree was an old Siva temple. In front of the temple stretched the small river bed. It is a confluence with innumerable, huge boulders scattered up to the end of the river horizon. On all the three sides stood the steep and dark mountains. It was all so quiet except for the murmuring sound of the rivers, the only sound in the whole panorama.

Here under this peepal tree the first enlightenment came when the monk got buried in a deep meditation. The moment was ripe with infinite potentiality. It saw the birth of a new outlook, a new philosophy which was to be the foundation stone of the monk's global movement. All these years of renunciation he only struggled to realize this truth, to understand the true nature of the Cosmic Reality, the Brahman, that the scriptures had taught him. The way was meditation, the long inward journey, at the end of which the restless seeker reached the great illumination. It all came here. He realized the Truth for which he had left behind everything, and practised intense austerities. The Ultimate, all-pervading Reality was imbedded in the core of every little atom of this universe. The macrocosm was indeed there inside the heart of the microcosm. The phenomenal world is nothing but the noumenon, the One Reality. The knot in his heart got opened. A long-drawn inner conflict got resolved. Intense renunciation brought him the vision of God in all things and brought forth in later years the celebrated philosophy of Vivekananda—God in everything.

Thenceforward only God remained; the world disappeared altogether. To his brother disciple Akhandananda (his pre-monastic name, Gangadhar) he said in the fullness of this great spiritual breakthrough, 'Oh, Gangadhar! I have just passed

through one of the greatest moments of my life. Here under the peepal tree one of the greatest problem of my life has been solved. I have found the oneness of the macrocosm with microcosm. In this microcosm of the body everything that is there (in the macrocosm) exists. I have seen the whole universe within an atom'. We remember the realization of the ancient *ṛṣis—anoraṇīyan mahato mahīyan*—the ultimate Reality is smaller than the small and greater than the great. (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 1.2.20). In the exuberance of the mystic vision he wrote in his notebook, 'The microcosm and macrocosm are built on the same plan. Just as the individual soul is encased in the living body, so is the Universal Soul in the Living Prakriti (Nature)—the objective universe. Shivā (i.e. Kali) embracing Shiva: this is not a fancy This dual aspect of the Universal Soul is eternal. So what we perceive or feel is this combination of the Eternally formed and the Eternally formless.'⁸

This realization at Kankrighat was the foundation of the new Vedanta of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. The orthodox Hinduism regarded the One as the Real, and the many as unreal. But Vivekananda added, 'And what Ramakrishna Paramahansa and I have added to this is, that the Many and the One are the same Reality, perceived by the same mind at different times and in different attitudes.'⁹

* * * * *

'Get up musafir. Bundle your things. You have still to go a long way.' The wandering monk along with his companion stood up for the next movement.

From Kankrighat began the final part of their journey to Almora. The taste of the first great realization now filled him with

8. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 250.

9. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 29.

an intensified impulse of renunciation. It was now, as his disciples heard from him afterwards, 'a passionate longing to lose one's identity, to be united with the lowliest and most hidden things, to go forth from amongst men, and be no more remembered by them.'¹⁰ He was now under the vow to ask for nothing and even fast unto death if no food was voluntarily offered to him. The 'longest time he had ever gone without food, under this austerity, was five days',¹¹ as he revealed afterwards. Only a robust athlete like Vivekananda could stand such incredible austerities. It was superhuman.

But the body revolted despite all the strength of the spirit. On the outskirts of Almora Vivekananda fainted in hunger and weariness. It was in a muslim graveyard. The helpless companion Akhandananda rushed in search of water in the stony hillside. Meanwhile came forward a fakir, the custodian of the cemetery, and seeing the monk's plight, offered him a cucumber. Too tired, even to eat it, the monk now asked the fakir to put it in his mouth. With due reverence the fakir held back, saying that he was a mussalman. Softly came the reply, 'What does that matter? Are we not all brothers?'

The wandering monk could never forget this life-saver, the muslim fakir. Seven years after, when the world-famous Vivekananda returned to Almora, he spied out, unmistakably, the face of the fakir from among the crowd in the procession organized in his honour. With gratitude Vivekananda stopped, called him near and gave him some reward. To the assembled crowd he introduced the fakir, 'This man really saved my life. Never had I felt so exhausted.'

In the golden sunlight of the morning we stood on the stone where Vivekananda fainted nearly a century ago. Two great Almora devotees of Vivekananda, had built

up a small memorial rest-house there for visitors to stop and remember Swamiji even for a while. The deserted stone cottage of the fakir with its broken roofs still stood there. Jungle creepers had covered it. Our heart filled with gratitude for the fakir who once saved the unknown prophet.

* * * * *

We climbed down from the main road and reached a small temple of Divine Mother, Patal Bhairavi. Our guide reminded us that here nearly a century ago Lala Badri Shah, one of the richest men in Almora and a retired Army Captain used to visit this temple every morning. It was his daily habit, as his relatives told us, to see a sadhu first and then take food. Here one blessed morning Shahji met two disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Shivananda and Sri Vaikuntha Nath Sanyal. He had already known Swami Akhandanandaji, another disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. It is this Swami, the 'Bengali Gangadhar' or the 'Babaji, who returned from Tibet', who first announced to Badri Shah about the proposed visit of Swamiji to Almora. From Badrinath he wrote to Shahji: 'A Gurubhai of mine is proceeding to Almora He is one of my advanced Gurubhais, a highly educated gentleman leading a perfect ascetic life since ten or twelve years. He has sacrificed all his worldly prosperities for the sake of Almighty. Now he is in the stage of Paramahansa¹²'

Badri Shah who was already a benevolent host to the disciples of Ramakrishna, now felt blessed to receive the Paramahansa, who arrived finally at Almora.

* * * * *

In the glittering sunlight of a winter morning we stood in awe and silence, in the unspeakable beauty of Kasar Devi. A lover of sublimity he had chosen these

¹⁰. Ibid., p. 55.

¹¹. Ibid., p. 60.

¹². *Swami Vivekananda's Three Visits to Almora* (Almora: The Ramakrishna Kutir) p. 3.

remote caves of Kasar Devi as the place of his meditation. 'The saints live on mountain tops', he used to say, 'to enjoy the scenery'.¹³ Even after nearly a century, this place remains as the sublimest part of Almora. The spot is indeed chosen for gods. Standing far above the valley of men, and the undulating surface of the sea of clouds beneath, this holy mountain top is even now protected by tall pine trees guarding the holy spot like silent sentinels. Through their branches one can have the closest view of the snow white body of Trishul and Nandadevi.

It is indeed the spot from where mother nature, Prakriti, could feel her nearness to the Purusha—the all-white Shiva. One can feel, even by a casual visit, that it is a secluded and sacred spot from where one feels nearness and even oneness with the Shiva within—the Self, the Existence, Knowledge and Bliss Absolute.

The unspeakable sublimity and the calmness of the place make one wonder that Vivekananda could ever leave this place. But he had to. It happened one day when he got down to the town and went to his friend Lala Badri Shah. Destiny was waiting for him with the rudest shock to his naturally loving heart—a telegram with the news of his sister's suicide in extremely pitiful circumstances. And the wire was soon followed by a letter which told, in all its horrid details, of the inevitable step which his helpless widow sister was forced to take.¹⁴ At once the dream of a meditative life in the Himalayas was shattered to pieces. Restless and disconsolate, he retreated into the caves of Kasar Devi, far away from the last sign of human habitation. But peace was gone. And the unquenching fire of agony for his beloved sister, one day

drove him out, as it were, from these solitary caves. He realized that his mission was waiting for him on the burning plains of India, and not in the luxury of lonely living amidst these caves. 'Nothing in my whole life ever so filled me with the sense of work to be done. It was as if I were thrown out from that life of solitude, to wander to and from in the plains below', he said. Vivekananda left Almora with a burning passion in his heart—a passion to lift Hindu women, especially the widows, to the glory of a new life of total independence—social, intellectual and spiritual.

That was the beginning of his prophetic dedication to the cause of 'the women and the masses'. These became henceforward the two missions nearest to his heart. In the West once when he felt himself dying, he called his disciple Nivedita and confided to her, 'Never forget! The word is, *Women and the People*'.¹⁵

This was a boon and benediction for India and humanity as a whole. Nothing but this terrible thunderbolt could make him move out of this most lovable spot of sublimity. Shiva returned to drink the death-dealing poison of human suffering. But did he not look all the more beautiful now? To this Nilakantha Shiva, whose throat turned blue with poisons of existential suffering of humanity, Indians pray in their supplications, 'Oh Shiva! Thou indeed look all the more beautiful, despite your deformity. For, therein lies the refuge for all beings—the refuge of fearlessness.'

* * * * *

But wanderlust is a sort of divine madness. It hardly gets satisfied. With his brother disciples Vivekananda now started walking right from Almora to Badri. At Karnaprayag the journey had to be abandoned because of famine in the region. In Rishikesh, at the foothills of the Himalayas

13. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 32.

14. *Swami Vivekananda's Three Visits to Almora*, op. cit., p. 8.

15. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 192.

he again plunged into severe asceticism and spiritual practice. Suddenly he fell sick to the point of death. When the brother disciples began to cry in despair a strange monk came, as if from nowhere, and saved his life. Vivekananda opened his eyes, and said, 'Cheer up my boys. I shall not die.' Once again in this apparently unconscious state he saw that he had a mission in the world to fulfil, and that he could not leave his body before the mission was fulfilled.¹⁶

Little recovered, Vivekananda now moved again. But his brother disciples, too, now followed him like famished gulls round the only ship in the ocean. Finally at Meerut he got determined to be freed from this last holy bondage. To the brother disciples he now clearly told: 'It is not possible to perform any spiritual disciplines, unless the Maya (bondage) of the brother disciples is given up. Whenever I plan to practise disciplines, the Master puts some obstacle on my way. Now I shall go alone. I shall not tell anyone where I am staying.'¹⁷ One morning in the late January of 1891 Vivekananda left them, and started walking alone with God.

The wandering friar now got engulfed in the vast ocean of Indian humanity. His days now alternated between the kings' palaces and pariahs' huts, between pundits' houses and philosophers' chambers, between orthodox Hindu householders and Mohammedan hosts. None failed to notice an unmistakable divinity and a prophetic power enveloping him. But neither discussions nor devotions could satisfy his longings. From Delhi to Rajputana, from Madras to Kanyakumari, from Bombay to Mysore, he moved in order to find ways to fulfil his master's mission. Sri Ramakrishna once said: 'Naren will teach the world.' But whom to teach? Centuries of ignorance

and poverty and upper class exploitation had driven the millions of Indian masses to become only next-door neighbour to brutes. Did not his master teach him 'There is no religion for empty stomachs?'

The suffering of teeming millions gradually loomed larger and larger in all its horrid dimensions. There was no hope from the so-called educated and the upper classes. He felt himself responsible. With this rude realization came a strange change in him. Without his knowing it, the desire for personal salvation got slowly drowned under an overwhelming desire to save the suffering millions of India. The asceticism of Suka and the intellectual brilliance of Shankara now gave way to the bleeding passion of a Christ and Buddha. Finally, he decided to go to the West, in order to help his countrymen.

At Mt. Abu Road, at this moment, two of his brother disciples suddenly spied him. They saw in him a transfigured presence, a radiant figure. They begged him to return to the monastery at the height of this divine radiance. Vivekananda literally cried out, 'I cannot understand your so-called religion! But my heart has grown much, much larger, and I have learnt to feel (the sufferings of others). Believe me, I feel it very sadly!'¹⁸ His voice was choked with emotion, and tears began to roll down his cheeks. Instantly he tore himself away from the brother disciples. He was gone. He lost himself again in the vast sea of suffering humanity.

A brother disciple Swami Turiyananda who heard these words, said: 'I could clearly see that the whole suffering of humanity had penetrated his palpitating heart.' They heard in his voice the compassionate cry of the Avalokiteswara, the Buddha who turns in all directions in order to respond to human suffering. They found

16. *Life of Swami Vivekananda*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 257.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 261.

18. Romain Rolland, *Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama) p. 31.

in their master's life a repetition of the 'tale of Bodhisattwa who had held himself back from Nirvana till the last grain of dust in the universe should have gone in before him to salvation'.¹⁹ The wandering friar did not know that in his begging bowl destiny had already dropped the priceless jewel, the radiance of a prophet's divinity, which he was still seeking in silence and solitude. His disciples understood later on that 'there may in a great life be elements which, he who lives it may not himself understand.'²⁰

* * * * *

In early May of 1898, Vivekananda returned, after his western conquest, to his beloved Almora. It was now a return of the prophet of the masses and moribund Hinduism. Along with his dear English disciple, Goodwin and hundreds of admirers he entered Almora and found, 'it was roses, roses all the way'. Just before entering Almora, Vivekananda was made to mount a gaily decorated horse and a huge procession followed him. Three thousand people gathered in the bazaar in front of Badri Shah's house. All along the way women stood on the roof-tops and showered him with flowers and auspicious rice. A big pandal was set up and houses were lit with candles. The slumbering Almora suddenly woke up to receive its beloved monk, now a world-teacher, a *jagad-guru*.

It was in the house of Badri Shah that he was now received again and there he stayed for nearly two months and a half. The housemaster showed us the room where he stayed. It was a beautiful room with low doors, in the hill fashion, and heavily carved with designs on wood. Right outside the room was the main bazaar road. Sitting there on a wooden chair, Swamiji used to meet people and speak to the

assembled listeners. It is there that he gave his celebrated Almora-speech. Two addresses, one in English and the other in Sanskrit were read out in this reception. Vivekananda made a short speech. Almora heard only the voice of the old wandering monk.

This is the land of dreams of our forefathers, in which was born Parvati, the Mother of India. This is the holy land where every ardent soul in India wants to come at the end of its life, and to close the last chapter of its mortal career. ...As peak after peak of this Father of Mountains began to appear before my sight, all the propensities to work, ...seemed to quiet down, and instead of talking about what had been done and what was going to be done, the mind reverted to that one eternal theme which the Himalayas always teach us...—renunciation.²¹

To the request made by the Almora people 'to start a centre in the Himalayas', in the tradition of Acharya Shankara, Vivekananda replied, 'this is the spot which I want to select as one of the great centres to teach this universal religion.' This dream was realized within two years in a remote corner of Almora, and this centre was known as the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati.

In spite of all these ovations, Vivekananda would find little peace. He now felt that even Almora was not quiet enough. Twice he retreated to Dewaldhar, an estate some twenty miles to north. There he rode on horseback like a child, in the midst of the lonely Himalayan valley. His health recouped, he now decided to return to plains for his work. Before he left he gave a lecture at the English club, at their invitation, on 'the Eastern and Western approach to soul'. At the Almora Inter College, he gave two more lectures, in response to the public request. Here he gave

19. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 34.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1964) Vol. 3, pp. 352-54.

his first lecture in Hindi, the subject being 'Vedic Teaching in Theory and Practice'.

* * * * *

In 1898 Vivekananda returned again to Almora. This time he came for rest. The last few years of incessant struggle both in the West and in India, left him physically shattered. His mission was not yet over. There were miles to go before he desired sleep. The tired athlete needed a few days of quiet breathing. Vivekananda came this time along with his two other brother-disciples, Swamis Turiyananda and Niranjanananda, and two of his own disciples, Swamis Sadananda and Swarupananda. On the way to Almora, at Nainital, people spread flowers and palm tree leaves on the road. It was an Oriental custom, as his western disciples felt, in which they received Jesus at Jerusalem, after his divine ordination. Along with all these monks Swamiji stayed in a large house rented by Capt. and Mrs. Sevier. These two English disciples of the Swami had already come earlier to Almora in order to start the Himalayan centre for their master in the house known as 'Thompson House'. Here in this house, on 11 June 1898, Vivekananda started once again his beloved journal *Prabuddha Bharata* or 'Awakened India', under the editorship of Swami Swarupananda. It was originally started two years before in Madras, but with the sudden death of its brilliant editor Rajam Ayer it suddenly stopped publication. Swamiji decided to make its home now in the Himalayas. The other western friends and disciples, Sister Nivedita, Mrs. Ole Bull and Josephine MacLeod lived now at 'Oakley House', another bungalow not very far from the 'Thompson House'. Today 'Thompson House' stands almost exactly in the same shape, and is used for a different purpose. The 'Oakley House' still belongs to the relatives of Badri Shah's family. Standing on these once-hallowed houses, people still hope that some day they will

shine as monuments in the name of Vivekananda.

Here every morning on the 'rose covered verandah' of 'Oakley House' he used to have his breakfast and converse with his western disciples. The magnificent deodars (the tree of the gods) stood all around with their odour of black-berry fragrance, and added to the 'unutterable depth' of the environment. And above all there was 'the great white range like a presence that cannot be set aside.'²²

In this Himalayan sublimity Vivekananda was at the height of his thoughts. Only great figures and sweeping movements in Indian history passed through his mind. It was at Almora that he got a letter with the news of self-immolation and death of his ascetic, Pavhari Baba. With a sense of great loss, Swamiji read out the letter to all, and said 'Pavhari Baba has completed all his sacrifices with the sacrifice of his own body. He has burnt himself in the sacrificial fire.'²³

With a deep reverence he spoke of Vidyasagar's astounding sense of dignity and self-respect. Defying all English traditions he went, when invited, to meet the Viceroy, in his typical half-naked pundit's dress of a dhoti, a chaddar and a simple slipper. He spoke again, of the nun who was asked how long the carnal desires invade the sadhaka. She only sent out a dish of ashes to the inquirer outside, who now realized that these desires will exist in some form or other so long as the body is not consigned to flames.

In the Himalayan solitude, the mood of renunciation and self-imposed solitude reared its head again. Vivekananda soon left alone for Shya Devi, a forested peak

²². *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, Ed. by Sankari Prasad Basu (Calcutta: Nababharat Publishers, 1982) Vol. 1, p. 11.

²³. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 300.

some miles west of Almora. For three days he stayed there. When he returned he felt happy that he was still the 'old-time sannyasin, able to go barefoot and endure heat or cold and scanty fare, unspoiled by the West'. The sannyasin returned from this retreat only to receive another painful news of his life. A wire brought the news that Goodwin, his faithful and child-like disciple, had died at Ootacamund. For a few days Vivekananda was stunned with an unspeakable grief. Then one day he came out, and as he looked at the distant snow peaks he quietly uttered: 'The days of my public utterance are over.' That night he composed a poem *REQUIESCAT IN PACE* and sent it to Goodwin's mother in London. Vivekananda seldom spoke in public thereafter.

Of all the blessed souls who followed Swamiji this time at Almora it is Nivedita who reaped the golden harvest of this Himalayan summer. Vivekananda had already accepted her as his daughter. There he spoke in London to her of the great purity and sacrifice of Holy Mother Sarada Devi. And then, in a dream-like mood of mystic calmness Vivekananda told her, 'Yes, yes! these things have been, and they will again be. Go in peace, my daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole.'²⁴ At Almora the fire of Swamiji's spiritual moods flickered again. In the sight of the mountains he was never tired of speaking of Shiva.²⁵ And they were meant for her. She must come out of the bondages, from the 'inevitable suffering that comes of the different national habits of the body and mind.'²⁶ Untrained to this kind of thinking her old thoughts revolted. Her English patriotism now came to the surface. The

'scepticism of mine'²⁷ as she said, refused to accept all the words of her master. The desire for external dynamism now stood face to face with the need of a complete and ascetic renunciation of all selfish motives, and the subtlest remnants of the 'determinedly insular' ideals that she had been obstinately clinging to. It was time to learn the 'Indian point of view' if she indeed wished to be dedicated to India. The need now was a purgatorial journey of self-denial, solitude, and constant striving for self-purification. 'Patriotism like yours is a sin', Swamiji scolded her. 'The old cat must die', Vivekananda used to say. Nivedita realized the pains of this frightening journey. It must be a death of the old self and then, a complete rebirth into an altogether new life of total renunciation. Inner conflict expressed now as outer restlessness. For days, her mind was in an upheaval, 'the inner strife grew high.'²⁸ The boat was now in the choppy sea. Then one morning in a mood of desperate restlessness she stood under the huge deodar tree of the Oakley House. She was now in a frightening void. It was darkness outside and chaos inside. One of the older ladies of the party approached Vivekananda in order to put an end to this unbearable conflict which 'might easily go too far'.

In the evening Vivekananda returned. He felt he himself must go out somewhere to bring that ineffable peace for his daughter caught in this terrible torment of the soul. 'You were right,' he said. 'There must be a change. I am going away into the forests to be alone and when I come back I shall bring peace.' The great disciple of Ramakrishna did not know that the beatitude of peace was already with him. He was never conscious that Ramakrishna's prophecy that 'Naren would manifest his own gift

24. Ibid., p. 35.

25. Ibid., p. 72.

26. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 19.

27. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 22.

28. Ibid., p. 298.

of bestowing knowledge with a touch' had already come true. That evening at Almora Nivedita 'proved the truth of that prophecy'. No. Vivekananda had not to go to a forest any more. His very presence was now fraught with the power of a Christ and Buddha. His holy 'touch', like Ramakrishna's, now had the power of bringing great transfiguration. No words can better describe this blessed moment of theophany, of the revelation of God within and without, than Nivedita's own words :

...Then he turned and saw that above us the moon was new, and a new sudden exclamation came into his voice as he said, 'See the Mohammedans think much of the new moon. Let us also with a new moon begin a new life!' As the words ended, he lifted his hands and blessed with silent depths of blessing, his most rebellious disciple, by this time kneeling before him.... It was assuredly a moment of wonderful sweetness of reconciliation.... For alone in meditation, I found myself gazing deep into an Infinite good, to the recognition of which no egoistic reasoning had led me... And I understood, for the first time, that the greatest teachers may destroy in us a personal relation only in order to bestow the Impersonal vision in its place.²⁹

The dark night of the soul was over. It was a new dawn. For the first time she realized that 'there is a certain definite quality which may be called spirituality', that 'the soul may long for God as the heart for human love', that even so-called 'nobility or unselfishness' was but the 'feeblest and most sordid qualities compared to the fierce white light of selflessness.'³⁰ She felt 'blessed' and wrote to her friend

in London, 'India is indeed the holy land.'³¹ Of these memorable days she again wrote, 'we have been living and breathing in the sunshine of the great religious ideals all these months, and God has been more real to us than common man'.³²

* * * * *

The old mother of the Shah family took us under that blessed deodar. Through traditions they knew the place and the tree, the silent witness of the memorable moment where Vivekananda's great dream on the eve of his Himalayan life was fulfilled. On the precincts of the Oakley House we stood, buried in the thoughts of how the Shiva-guru Vivekananda brought the instant conflagration of divinity in his daughter by a holy touch. Each stone in the house began to speak to us of that blessed evening in this holy abode of Shiva. Relations of Shahji now own this old house of hallowed memory. They preserve the letter of Swamiji written to Shahji. It is their talisman. The three magnificent kerosene lamps of Chinese design, used by Nivedita and others, are still preserved as holy mementoes. In the winter morning of late December we stood under the blessed deodar in the sun-blached lawn and looked straight at the magnificent snow-peaks right across the deep brown gorge below. Some of the household members by this time had gathered round us. In that vibrant silence and all-pervading peace, the tall deodar breathed. A gust of wind brought a sudden stir in its leaves. Some of us felt the 'living presence'. We realized our journey on the footprints of the Himalayan monk had seen a consummation.

²⁹. Ibid., pp. 80-81.

³⁰. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, op. cit., Vol. 1, p. 13.

³¹. Ibid., p. 18.

³². Ibid., p. 25.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA : THE ESTABLISHER OF DHARMA

SWAMI SATYARUPANANDA

Man has a unique capacity to take an intuitive leap out of his own mind and to know what is beyond the senses. This knowing the supersensuous is the essence of religion. Religion begins with the attempt of transcending the mind and the senses and culminates in the direct experience of the transcendental beyond the senses. Swami Vivekananda in the lecture 'Unity, the Goal of Religion', delivered in New York in 1896 said :

This universe of ours, the universe of the senses, the rational, the intellectual, is bounded on both sides by the illimitable, the unknowable, the ever unknown. Herein is the search, herein are the inquiries, here are the facts; from this comes the light which is known to the world as religion. Essentially, however, religion belongs to the supersensuous and not to the sense plane.¹

Though the quest for the unknown is inherent in man, the known is apparently so charming and titillates his senses so much that man almost forgets about the unknown and becomes mad after the known, that is, the world of senses. When the known dominates the life of man, this universe of the senses becomes the only reality for him. And once the man is convinced that this universe of the senses is the only reality, then naturally he desires to enjoy worldly pleasures and sinks deep into sensuality.

A society where a larger number of human beings are dominated by the thoughts of the senses, becomes more irreligious. Morality degrades there, while immorality and unrighteousness increase.

The Hindu scriptures call this state of

affairs as *dharmaglāni*, that is, degradation of religion² or righteousness. In the Gita Lord Kṛṣṇa says 'Whenever there is decline of righteousness and rise of unrighteousness, O Bhārata then I incarnate myself'. Establishment of Dharma or righteousness is thus the main purpose of God's incarnation from age to age. Lord Kṛṣṇa has set forth two conditions for his incarnation, namely, *dharmaglāni* and *adharma abhyutthānam* that is, decline of righteousness and rise of unrighteousness. The former is always followed by the latter. But what are the characteristics of *dharmaglāni* ?

One of the characteristics of *adharma* is that it is arrogantly aggressive. It encroaches upon the field of *dharma* and assaults it without any reason. *Adharma* always tries to suppress the principles of *dharma*. Since both *dharma* and *adharma* influence and mould the character of man, the best method of recognizing *dharmaglāni* is to observe the character of those persons in whose life *dharma* has declined.

The decadence of religion begins when people ignore the transcendental aspect of religion and overemphasize the external, ritualistic and ceremonial part of it, which is confined to sense-plane only. This decadence takes place in two ways : First the followers of a religion become dogmatic and rigid. This dogmatism and rigidity give birth to fanaticism and once fanaticism sets in, it does immense harm to the very spirit of religions, and finally kills it. Rituals are like the chaff of a fruit which is necessary for the protection and ripening of the kernel. But once the kernel is ripened the chaff must be removed. Those fanatic

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1973) Vol. 3, p. 1.

2. The term religion has been used in this article to indicate the Hindu concept of Dharma with all its broad spectrum shades of meaning.

ritualists who adhere to the rituals only, remain religiously ill-fed and spiritually starved. Religion then becomes like a body without a soul. The so-called religious rituals become a camouflage for the so-called religious persons to hide their self-indulgence and carnality. Spirituality, the very soul of religion evaporates, and religion loses all its power of moulding characters of individuals and of influencing society. This state of affairs in the field of religion and spirituality has been termed as *dharmaglāni* in the Hindu scriptures.

Once the decline of righteousness sets in, unrighteousness increases. Human mind cannot be kept in abeyance. Man must have something to fill his mind with. When man loses interest in such higher values as spirituality and religion, worldly desires and passions rush in to fill up the vacuity of the mind. This is actually what happens when *dharma* declines. When the rise of *adharma* or unrighteousness manifests itself, materialism invades the human heart. Men do not believe in any kind of reality beyond the senses. They have no moral scruples or spiritual aims. Atheism becomes their philosophy, selfishness their guide, and sense enjoyment their practice. The *lokāyatas* or materialists of ancient times were the representatives of this kind of lower life. Their philosophy was 'eat, drink, and be merry'. They used to teach, 'As long as you live, enjoy the world even by incurring loan because once the body is reduced to ashes, there is no coming over here again.' When this kind of materialism grabs the heart of man, the beast in him is unleashed, the instincts become unbridled, and egotism becomes the master of his life.

From the very ancient times this phenomenon of the downfall of *dharma* and the rise of *adharma* has been profusely illustrated in the Hindu religious symbolism. In *Rāmāyana* for instance, the confrontation of Rama and Ravana represents this fact.

In the *Mahābhārata*, Kauravas led by Duryodhana were representatives of *adharma*, selfishness, egoism, and arrogance. They were constantly oppressing and fighting with the Pandavas, led by Yudhisthira, the representatives of *dharma*.

Seen in this background, Indian history presents us with a picture of a dialectical process between the forces of good, *dharma* and the forces of evil, *adharma*. As it had happened on many earlier occasions, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were the periods, when the onslaughts of *adharma* had assumed huge proportions in India. A brief survey of that period will give us an idea about the religious situation prevailing then in India.

Europeans began to come to India with the arrival of Vasco da Gama in 1498 at the Indian shore. Then came others, one after another, the Dutch, the French and the English. The repercussion of the arrival of Europeans to India was far reaching. Among all the Europeans, who came to India, English people became the rulers of India for almost two centuries. Along with English people came their language and culture. The introduction of English education in India opened the flood-gates of materialistic culture and ideas of the West. The onslaught of new ideas and ideals altered the social, moral, and religious values of the newly educated people. The impact was so great that it shook the whole nature. Calcutta was the capital of the then India, and the seat of English learning and western culture. Therefore, the effect of English education and western culture was most conspicuous in Bengal, and particularly in Calcutta. Describing the weight of this impact, historian R. C. Mazumdar writes : 'Fifty years of English education brought greater changes in the minds of the educated Hindus of Bengal than the previous thousand years'.³ One of the most important educa-

3. *The History and Culture of Indian*

tional institutions of 19th century India which helped the spreading of English Education and Western cultural ideas, was Hindu College. Writing about the condition of young students of Hindu College, R. C. Mazumdar notes : 'It is known from other sources also that a section of boys of the Hindu College gave up old religious ideas and social customs, and deliberately adopted practices most offensive to Hindu sentiments, such as drinking wine, eating beef etc.'⁴

The influence of English education and western culture made the young Indians ridicule and reject all that was ancient and traditional. Thus, while the educated young men of that time lost their moorings from their ancient ideals of religious and moral values, they did not have any higher and life-sustaining values to fall back upon. An incident illustrates the general trend of the mind and the people of that time. Sri Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, one of the great literary luminaries of Bengal, once met Sri Ramakrishna. The latter asked him during their conversation—'Well, what do you say about man's duties?' Bankim replied—'If you ask me about them I should say they are eating, sleeping and sex life'.⁵ Sri Ramakrishna at once expressed his displeasure and corrected him.

Not only the social ethics and morality had gone down, but religion had been reduced to lifeless rituals. Describing the religious condition of the Hindus of that time R. C. Mazumdar observes :

So far as the Hindu masses were concerned, religion meant only an unending series of rituals and ceremonies, performed in strict accordance with scriptural rules. Many obnoxious rites were practised by the common people, and immoral customs, with belief in witchcraft and sorcery, were in vogue. These were at least

partly legacies of Tantric beliefs and practices which had a strong hold in Bengal. Religion as a source of moral purity and spiritual force exercised little influence over a large section of the common people.⁶

Another heavy blow to the Hindu society came from the Christian missionaries. Long before the introduction of English education, Christianity came to India. But this Christianity was the European version of the religions of Jesus the Christ, which did not represent the great life and deep love of the Messiah. Particularly, when Portuguese came to India, the Christians brought sword and fire along with the Holy Bible. The Portuguese tried to force the so-called Christianity on Hindus by force and coercion. Later, when the Britishers became the rulers of India, Christian missionaries intensified their onslaught on the religion of the land. Thus instead of imparting true religion and spirituality, proselytism became the sole aim and end of Christian missionaries. Some people, especially the younger generation educated in the Macaulay's system of English education, gave their religion up and embraced Christianity. The situation became alarming and agitated the minds of thinking Hindus. But in this land of religion and spirituality, the ancient values cannot be suppressed and subordinated for long. As a reaction, various reform movements sprang up. The first amongst these reform movements was the Brahmo Samaj.

Brahmo Samaj was founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy who was well acquainted with eastern and western thought. Though his scholarship and vast experience had made him generous, he failed to appreciate the Hindu symbolism and sadhana of image worship. He not only criticized the image worship but also opposed it strongly. Brahmo Samaj was established by him to

People, Ed. R.C. Mazumdar (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan) Vol. 10, part II, p. 89.

4. Ibid. p. 90.

5. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math 1985) p. 669.

6. *The History and Culture of Indian People*, op. cit., Vol. 10, p. 26.

encounter the polytheistic doctrines and practices. Its approach to religion was thus one-sided and negative. Commenting on Ram Mohan Roy's work, a later Brahmo leader, Shivanath Shastri said: 'The mission of Ram Mohan Roy was simple, namely, to call his countrymen to discard idolatry and come to worship of One True God. His work was mainly negative and reformatory and not positive or constructive.'⁷ In the next great leaders of Brahmo Samaj like Devendranath Tagore, Keshab Chandra Sen and others, a change in this rigid Brahmo attitude was perceptible. But this change was primarily due to the influence of Sri Ramakrishna on the pure and devotional mind of Keshab, who started in the Samaj chantings in the name of Hari or Divine Mother.

Another potent and powerful movement of the period which faced the challenge posed by western materialism and Christian missionaries, was Arya Samaj founded by Dayananda Saraswati. Though a great scholar of the Vedas and an unparalleled polemic of his time, he did not believe in the Hindu Puranic religion but sought to establish the superiority of the Vedas. While he accepted Vedas as the only authority, he did not accept them as a whole. He accepted only Brāhmanas or Samhitas and did not accept Upanishads as absolute authority. Not only that, Swami Dayananda Saraswati rejected the interpretation of orthodox commentators like Sāyaṇācārya, Mahīdhara and others, and did not consider any commentary to be binding on any one. He gave his own interpretation of the Vedas and his interpretation of R̥g-Veda Samhita became the bedrock of Arya Samaj. Swami Dayananda not only waged war against orthodox Hinduism but also rejected and criticized Islam and Christianity. His approach to

the problem of religion was rather aggressive and somewhat intolerant.

Besides these two major socio-religious movements, there were some local and minor religious figures like Pandit Shasadhara Tarkachudamani and others who were, in their own limited way, defending traditional Hinduism, image worship and Hindu institutions during those days.

All these great reformers and the reform movements were one-sided. Hence their impact was not deep enough to face the crisis that the Hindu religion and society was passing through. The degeneration was so deep that nothing short of a radical transformation of human consciousness and a 'root and branch reform' of the Hindu society, could avert the crisis. During the period, unrighteousness or *adharma* had come in the form of materialism through western education and culture. Therefore, righteousness or *dharma* was to be established by demonstrating the futility of materialism and the utility and importance of spiritual ideals in life. As Swami Vivekananda observed, 'Here (in India) is the life-giving water with which must be quenched the burning fire of materialism which is burning the core of the hearts of millions in other lands. Believe me, my friend this is going to be.'⁸

It was at such a period of domination of the materialism in India that Sri Ramakrishna appeared on the scene. He brought forth, through his superhuman effort, this life-giving water from the springs of his own historic sadhana and varied divine realizations, and thus quenched the thirst of millions of souls. Through spirituality alone, he revitalized the Hindu society. Born with a sense of mission Sri Ramakrishna demonstrated through his exemplary life, the redeeming power of religion and spirituality. Writing about his mission, one noted authority observes:

8. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (1973) op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 105.

7. Ibid. p. 21.

Sri Ramakrishna had the conviction that his life had a divine purpose, that it was intended to demonstrate the truth of religion in this age, when human beings were steeped in materialism, in atheism, scepticism and agnosticism. He came in a very dark age, spiritually speaking, though materially one might say it was a very advanced age. People had scientific knowledge but spiritually, it was one of the darkest ages in human history. He was convinced that his life had a purpose—that he was to establish in the first place the reality of God, secondly, to demonstrate the truths of the various spiritual disciplines.⁹

It is interesting to see how Sri Ramakrishna addressed himself to the task of facing the challenge of western materialism and atheism in his own way. One of the charms of western education was its 'bread-winning' quality. Because of this, people were mad after it and did not care for the higher values of life. Acquiring bread-winning education had almost become the aim and object of life of all the newly educated persons. When Gadadhar, the premonastic name of Sri Ramakrishna, was sixteen or seventeen years old, his elder brother Ram Kumar, himself a scholar and a teacher, brought his younger brother with him to Calcutta and wanted to give him the kind of education which might win bread for him and his family. Gadadhar did not take any interest in it. Noticing this, one day when Ram Kumar admonished him for not paying attention to his studies, Gadadhar gave his celebrated reply which is one of the life-saving gospels for modern man. He told his elder brother, 'I do not want to learn the art of "bundling rice and plantain". What I do want is to have that which produces right knowledge and enables man truly to achieve the aim of his life.'¹⁰

9. Swami Satprakashananda, *Sri Ramakrishna's Life and Message in the Present Age* (Missouri: Vedanta Society of St. Louis, 1976) p. 23.

10. Swami Saradananda, *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 1970) p. 110.

He refused to prosecute the bread-winning education and demonstrated through his life that the aim of education was not earning money and accumulating material wealth. The real aim of education was to acquire that knowledge which gave spiritual illumination and enabled one to manifest the God in him.

Thus, while intense renunciation and longing for God was a burning passion in his life, the mode of expression of this longing was equally significant. It was pointed out earlier how Sri Ramakrishna's forerunners and contemporaries were vehement opponents of idol worship and thought it to be one of the banes of ancient Aryan religion. Sri Ramakrishna was to demonstrate that the Aryan religion was not wrong in accepting idol worship as a potent means of God-realization. In 1856 after the death of his elder brother, Sri Ramakrishna accepted the office of the priest in the Kali temple at Dakshineswar. For him the image of Kali was not a mere idol but a living Mother Goddess and a conscious entity. With this deep conviction, he applied his mind fully to the worship of the Divine Mother with the sole desire of having Her vision. Writing about the mode of his worship, his biographer records: '.... his mode of worship was different from that of ordinary Brahmins, in that he looked upon the image as the veritable representation of God and treated it as such'. While singing devotional songs his heart used to be filled with spiritual emotions. Forgetting the whole world including his own body he used to pray to the Divine Mother to grant him Her vision. This longing for the vision of the Divine Mother grew so intense that he was not aware how the days passed into nights and vice versa. Describing this state of his, his biographer records:

So great was his yearning for God that twelve strenuous years passed in a state of divine

intoxication, during half of which period he did not close his eyes in sleep. Unconscious of hunger, thirst, or any of the cravings of the body, or of the things happening around him, Sri Ramakrishna during that period of sadhana, was almost like a mad man. Day after day, month after month, year after year he was immersed in the depths of that intense spiritual fervour.

When he could no more bear this life without the vision of the Divine Mother, She revealed Herself to him in the image he was worshipping. Thus he showed that man could reach the pinnacle of spiritual realization through idol worship also. The idol was as good a symbol of the Supreme Reality, as the non-idol symbols. What was needed was intense devotion to the chosen ideal, and longing for spiritual realization.

But Sri Ramakrishna did not rest satisfied with the realization of the Divine Mother in the image he was worshipping. He performed various kinds of sadhana under the competent Gurus like Bhairavi Brahmani and Totapuri. He also went through the Islamic sadhana of Sufism under a Sufi Guru, Govinda Roy. He experienced two visions of Christ. In the picture of Madonna and the Child he saw the living presence of the Christ. Then again, under the Panchavati of Dakshineswar he had the vision of the Christ, the compassionate and the saviour.

Sri Ramakrishna concluded his sadhanas in the year 1873 by performing the worship of Sodasi, the Divine Mother in the person of his wife, Sri Sarada Devi. The result of his superhuman sadhana was that his individual soul merged into the universal Soul and became one with it. As his biographer records, 'It will not, therefore, be improper to say that from then on he performed all the actions of his life under the impulse of the divine mood.'¹¹ He was

thus established in the divine mood, in which he saw God in everything. Under the inspiration of this mood he now engaged himself in the work of the establishment of Dharma. Writes his biographer :

... his divine mood was in one continuous flow and the mission of his life was clearly and definitely undertaken. We find him firmly taking his stand against western materialism and the culture and civilization based on material science. For, it had entered India and made the men and women of the country assume an outlook on life which was contrary to that of the eternal religion and was daily weaning them from it. So he applied himself whole-heartedly to the introduction of true religion among these English educated people, so that through his guidance the lives of the people in general might be blessed with the light divine.¹²

What was this 'true religion' by which the lives of the people are blessed with the 'light divine'? Giving the essence of this 'true religion', Swami Vivekananda, the famous apostle of Sri Ramakrishna wrote :

Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within, by controlling nature external and internal. Do this either by work or worship or psychic control or philosophy—by one or more or all of these and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines or dogmas or rituals or books or temples or forms are but secondary details.¹³

This is the essence of religion. Man is divine. He is not matter. Therefore, only material life cannot satisfy him for long. Man can never have fulfilment in life merely by enjoying the material world through the senses. Immediate and direct experience of the divine only can quench the eternal thirst of man for fulfilment and peace. Realization of this divine within is the essence of religion. Each and every

11. *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master*, op. cit., p. 681.

12. Ibid. p. 682.

13. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (1977) p. 257.

human being irrespective of sex, caste, creed, colour or nationality can realize it. The different religions of the world are only various paths or means of realizing this divine within. Therefore, there cannot be any dispute among them. There are differences in individual persons. Their interests and needs are also different. Hence there are different religions according to the needs and interests of the individuals and groups. Each and every religion is fit to lead man to divine realization provided he follows it sincerely. This fact was demonstrated in the exemplary life of Sri Ramakrishna. Speaking about this divine teacher of the world, Swami Vivekananda said :

The time was ripe for one to be born who in one body would have the brilliant intellect of Shankara and the wonderfully expansive, infinite heart of Chaitanya ; one who would see in every sect the same spirit working, the same God, one who would see God in every being, one whose heart would weep for the poor, for the weak, for the outcast, for the downtrodden, for every one in this world, inside India or outside India and at the same time whose grand brilliant intellect would conceive of such noble thoughts as would harmonise all conflicting sects not only in India but outside India and bring a marvellous harmony, the universal religion of head and heart into existence. Such a man was

born and I had the good fortune to sit at his feet for years.¹⁴

The need of the hour as well as the long lasting solution to the problem of human existence, was the establishment of the eternal religion. The world was in need of a religion having the provisions for worshipping personal as well as impersonal God, and the recognition of all the religious paths as leading to the realization of One and the same Reality. The life of Bhagawan Sri Ramakrishna was a living example of this universal religion. As Mahatma Gandhi writes : 'The story of Ramakrishna Paramahansa's life is a story of religion in practice. His life enables us to see God face to face.'¹⁵ His divine life, thus demonstrated that God does exist, that religion is practical and that man can realize God here and now. Thus by living a great and historic life of God realization in all its aspects, Sri Ramakrishna once again established *dharma* and thus saved the world from the destructive clutches of *adharma* that came with the flood of modern materialism.

14. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (1973) Vol. 3, p. 267.

15. *The Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1976) in the 'Foreword'.

SCIENCE AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

DR. M. LAKSHMI KUMARI

Science has become a way of living in this 20th century and may become more so in the 21st century towards which we are already thrusting. Yet to most of us, science is only a world of machines and mechanistic approaches to the problems of day-to-day life. Hardly anybody bothers to maintain the scientific temper with regard

to one's own life. It is the absence of this basic attitude that is creating so much disharmony in our individual and collective lives. However, in recent years there is emerging a new awareness that human development is also a precise science. It is, in fact, the basis of all other sciences, and there is an urgent need to delve into the

mysteries of this knowledge and explore its immense practical possibilities for the enrichment of human life at all levels.

The discovery that man is not just a collection of organic molecules endowed with a perfect mechanism of thought, speech and action but is something more has engaged the minds of the Indian people since ancient times. Behind this perishable body and mind is the imperishable Reality. This inner Reality, known as the Atman or Self is considered the one Truth to which all efforts, studies and movements should lead, just as in present-day scientific investigations all efforts seem to lead finally to a unifying concept. The knowledge of the Self was developed and perfected as a precise science and used by our ancient *ṛṣis* or seers (scientists?) to achieve man's multi-dimensional evolution towards real manhood or supermanhood. *Gurukulas*, the homes of our ancient teachers, were the centres of this man-making education and training which were designed to bring out man's inherent perfection and excellence in all departments of life, be it a pursuit of truth or fighting in battlefields.

Science in essence is a search for unity. All true enquiries, internal or external, would ultimately lead to the discovery of the basic oneness of the universe. The search for the ultimate in knowledge is the essence of the scientific temperament. In ancient India the knowledge of the basic solidarity of the universe blossomed into a spiritual or yogic culture, and the lives of the people were regulated by rational, universal laws and natural rhythms; and they lived in the full realization of their spiritual oneness with the entire universe, in total communion with the whole nature. Ethics, morality, social life and international dealings, all these bore the impress of this universal vision and harmony.

The knowledge of the omniscient, omnipotent, eternal, immortal Self as the

substratum of all that exists, dominated Indian thought for centuries and permeated in one way or other all aspects of life in our country. The awareness of the ultimate spiritual oneness of all existence of which man himself is a part, gave him the courage and wisdom to stand apart and watch the flow of life without being affected by the dualities in life. The Indian concepts of *viveka*, *vairāgya*, *tyāga*, *sevā*, *yajna* etc. came into being as off-shoots of this unitive knowledge.

However, with the passage of time, the general decline in the calibre of human personality made Indians more and more indifferent to these essential principles and values of life and dragged him down to a life centred in sensual pursuits. As Śrī Kṛṣṇa pointed out in the Gita, the great science of yoga got almost lost after long lapse of time. Fortunately, however, the eternal Truth has within it the power of its guaranteed preservation and perpetuation. In the course of millennia, whenever there was a large-scale prevalence of negative values or *adharma* in the land, some great soul appeared on the scene and re-established the balance with positive forces or *dharma* in the society.

A great set-back came with the arrival on the national scene of an alien culture totally addicted to materialistic values and mechanistic ways of life. But today this ancient way of life is being acclaimed again, after a lapse of a few centuries as the most scientific and modern. In the new terminology this way is known as a 'systemic', 'systematic' or 'holistic' way of life by eminent scientists, and sociologists. Swami Vivekananda felt the vibrations of this change even during his life-time. To quote him: 'The thoughtful men of the West find in our ancient philosophy, especially in the Vedānta, the new impulse of thought they are seeking, the very spiritual food and

drink for which they are hungering and thirsting.'

In our own country this wholesome science of life had been suitably modified and upgraded as 'Yugadharma' to suit the contemporary conditions of the different ages, by the seers or men of God-realization. A very practical exposition of this science of human development is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa gave to Arjuna, to cure him of his despondency when faced with the challenge of the battle of Kurukshetra. This knowledge transformed him into a man of action and a maker of destiny. Therein lies the clue as to the usefulness of this knowledge to one and all of us who have constantly to live with tension, anxiety, hurry, unfulfilled desires, self-pity, and boredom.

Śaṅkara's Advaitic insight added a new rational lustre to this science. In our living memory, Sri Ramakrishna manifested the essence of this wonderful science of integrated living in his own immaculate life and practically demonstrated the onward evolution of man into Godhood, based on this knowledge.

Swami Vivekananda fully recognized the great importance and practical utility of this knowledge for the qualitative enrichment of human life in the modern context. He crystallized and codified it into practical Vedanta. One of the finest preambles to this Vedanta or the 'science of the soul' as he used to call it, has been given by Swamiji in the following immortal sentences: 'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within, by controlling nature, external and internal: Do this either by work or worship, or psychic control or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free.'

In the above definition all the major facets of this 'science of soul' stand out. The first and foremost concerns the real nature of man. Only a knowledge of this

can provide him with the necessary clues for his further advancement. The second aspect concerns the various techniques available to man for the multi-dimensional unfoldment of his capacities. The last and most pertinent to us today is the great relevance and practical utility of this knowledge, in fighting the battle of life in the modern context of decay and decadence of human values.

For scores of centuries all our great ṛṣis have emphasized that the self or Atman in every being is eternal, immortal, perfect and infinite. Death means only a change of its centre from one body to another. Sword cannot pierce it, nor the fire burn it. Water cannot melt nor air dry it. This soul is held in bondage by matter, but is not conditioned by it. In its very essence it is free, unbounded, holy, pure and perfect. Somehow it finds itself tied down to matter and thinks of itself as matter. Perfection will be reached when this bond will break bringing freedom from imperfection, death, and misery.

Therefore the scriptures enjoin on man the necessity of self-knowledge in the dictum—'know thyself'. This search has to be done not outside, in the relative world of phenomenon but inside within the depths of the human mind. Search for this Truth was therefore considered the noblest of occupations surpassing all other material pursuits, the *summum bonum* of existence. This self was further recognized as Existence, Knowledge and Bliss. This self-knowledge has remained the central focusing point or the basis of the Indian way of life or *Sanatana dharma*. On such an understanding were based further discoveries of the laws that govern the spiritual world; the moral, ethical and spiritual relations between individual selves and finally the microcosm and the macrocosm. From the transient, ephemeral, and finite, to the eternal, infinite, and spiritual is the direction and course of

all evolution. Every soul is destined to be perfect and every being in the end will attain to that state. In that lies the be-all and end-all of existence, the ultimate rest and peace which every one seeks consciously or unconsciously. Swami Vivekananda has put it succinctly : 'The finite can find its ultimate rest when classified into the infinite.' Unification of all energies and forces within us in order to realize this potential divinity of the soul within, and manifesting it outside through one's thoughts, words and deeds or linking up the truth of inner reality with the truth of outer life is the highest aim of life. When this spiritual vision comes to us, we can link up the microcosm with the macrocosm, man and the Almighty. To become divine, to see God, becoming perfect even as the Father in Heaven is perfect, constitute the basic aspiration of the Hindu way of life.

Vivekananda's definition provides us also with the technique for the development of the human personality in the way indicated above. 'Control of nature, external and internal : Do it either by work or worship, psychic control or philosophy, by one, or more, or all of these and be free', Swamiji said. Body, mind and intellect together form the instruments available for man in his search for Truth. Firstly, he must understand what stands between him and his realization of truth, and eliminate these obstacles one by one. Indulgence at the body level pulls us down. Turbulence of mind and vagaries of intellect, tempt man into the world of senses. Straying there like a ship without a rudder, he loses himself.

The four-fold paths of self-development or yogas prescribed in our scriptures catch man where he is and provide him with the guidance and techniques to move towards his goal. A close scrutiny of these techniques—work, worship, psychic control and philosophy—would reveal that in each of them the goal is to make man get rid of

his foolish, ego-centric attachment to his little self, and his insatiable thirst for self-gratification. These four-fold paths help us to shift man's attention to more eternal, and universal values of life. Karma Yoga prescribes self-sacrifice through actions without attachment. Unconditional self-surrender is what Bhakti Yoga aims at. Rāja Yoga emphasizes great self-control and Jñāna Yoga takes man to the pinnacle of glory through self-analysis, tearing off the veil of false knowledge and goading the mind to its final realization. All these paths easily commingle in a man of perfection. According to Vivekananda, a complete man must combine all the four yogas in his own life. He must be equally active, equally mystical, equally intellectual, and equally emotional in his search for Truth.

What is the relevance of this great science of self-development in man's life today? The world is standing at cross-roads. Man's craze to control external nature without learning to control his internal nature has resulted in over-population, large scale industrial pollutions, irreparable occupational hazards, ignorance, insecurity, problems of unemployment, poverty, widespread exploitation of men, women, and children and some of the major social problems turning men into brutes. These have led to a world situation characterized by self-assertion, competition, excessive consumerism, rapid exploitation of natural resources, wasteful production and consumption, intolerance and violence in personal and public life, leading ultimately to self-annihilation. We have to carve out a new destiny for mankind which would usher in a bright dawn of fulfilment in man's life and provide for universal understanding, cooperation and social justice. Where man is at peace with himself he will also be at peace with the world around him. In this context what will ultimately restore sanity to man is an intense awareness of the self

within him, and within all others. The essential spirituality of all life is the basis of oneness, of Advaita, of the 'holistic' vision of life, as we call it today.

The cause of all misery is ignorance of the fundamental oneness of life. This is true everywhere either in social or in spiritual life. It is ignorance of our oneness that makes us hate each other. It is due to this ignorance that we do not know and do not love each other. As soon as we come to know our fundamental oneness, love comes, understanding comes and goodness comes. Good deeds and thoughts are the only way to manifest our innate divinity and reveal its natural perfection.

An awareness of this innate divinity of man, of the Absolute Self within all of us is dawning in the West today. The first refrains of this universal symphony are already being heard from the most unusual quarters, from the curious youth in the affluent countries searching for an alternate

way of life, other than of competition, aggrandizement and war-mongering. Many social reformers today are intent on creating in this way a new rhythm in the lives of thousands of dejected and demoralized men and women. Innumerable wealthy and affluent people are rejecting the life of luxury and comfort and adopting the style of voluntary simplicity and total renunciation. Last but not the least, the highly sophisticated super-scientists are beginning to knock at the door of the superconscious.

The deep interest, the world over, in this science of human development is a movement in the right direction. Fortunately, the modern scientific discoveries are also pointing to human consciousness as the last word in perfection. The more its faculties are understood and appreciated by man, the more would be the enrichment of man's life, in terms of efficiency, capacity to work, to love, and live in peace and harmony with himself and his surroundings.

A PILGRIMAGE TO MT. LOWE

BRAHMACHARINI BHAVANI

In 1894, an elegant, unique, seventy-bedroom hotel was built atop a mountain in southern California. Called the Echo Mountain House, it was located on Mt. Lowe in the San Gabriel Range, about 20 miles northeast of Pasadena. A visitor to the hotel had a spectacular view in every direction—looking out onto a wide expanse of mountain peaks and valleys, or gazing down on the dwarfed cities of Pasadena and Los Angeles. In fact, the view worked both ways, for the residents of these cities could look up and see a bright star: the white dome of the hotel spotlighted by a huge searchlight.

The hotel became quite famous in its day,

not only for its panoramic view, but also for its isolated inaccessability. Transporting visitors to and from the hotel was accomplished solely by means of a funicular or cable railway built up the side of the mountain.

In January 1900, Swami Vivekananda visited this hotel with Josephine MacLeod, Mr. and Mrs. Baumgardt and Mrs. Leggett. In testament of this fact is a photograph of him standing in the centre of one of the funicular cars. Swamiji stayed overnight at the hotel and probably visited the nearby Lowe Observatory, which was equipped with an excellent telescope. The next day he gave a talk and then took an excursion

further up Mt. Lowe, a 1,500-metre peak.

Three weeks after Swamiji was there, the hotel burned to the ground and was never restored. Lying undisturbed for over 80 years, the ruins are now part of the Angeles National Forest. After discovering in 1984 that there was a foot-path up to the ruins, a yearly pilgrimage was initiated and organized by the Vedanta Society of Southern California.

In 1986, Swami Swahananda joined the pilgrimage along with twenty-eight devotees ranging in age from sixteen to seventy. We met at the Vivekananda House, the Pasadena home where Swamiji stayed for six weeks with the Mead sisters during his second visit to the West. From this house, we drove in a caravan to the base of the mountain. At ten o'clock A.M., wearing backpacks containing food and water for the all-day hike, we set out on our walk up to the ruins. It was the middle of May, and as we began, it felt only slightly warmer than a typical spring day.

We set out on our journey fresh, eager and enthusiastic, but after an hour of cheerful walking and talking, we soon realized that the path was not as easy as we had anticipated. We began to feel hot and fatigued. The climb was quite steep and strenuous—almost straight up the side of the mountain—and as the temperature rose to 100°F, the full force of the noonday sun bore down on the side of the mountain we were climbing. Since there were no trees in this brush country, there was precious little shade in which to hide from the relentless rays of the sun.

As it got hotter and hotter, we began to stop more often in any little stray piece of shade we could find, to catch our breath and quench our thirst. Even with these frequent stops, however, the arduous climb proved too much for several of the devotees, and they had to return back down the mountain—hot, tired and discouraged. The

rest of us pushed onward and upward, dousing ourselves with water whenever we could.

There came a time during our climb when we felt as though we would never get to the top. Looking back, we could see how high up we had climbed, but gazing ahead there was no way of knowing how far we had yet to go. It was around one o'clock P.M., and after walking straight up for almost three hours in the tenacious heat, we were all exhausted and barely able to move. Faith alone took us to the top, and when at last the summit was visible ahead, we were elated and our initial enthusiasm for the pilgrimage returned. Our elation increased as we approached the ruins of the old Echo Mountain House where Swami Vivekananda stayed eighty-six years ago.

We found a shady spot close to where the old hotel had stood. The welcome shade was provided by a garden of various trees and plants that had probably been originally planted for the hotel, since they were not indigenous to the area. After lunch, we read the section from Marie Louise Burke's book, *Swami Vivekananda—His Second Visit to the West*, detailing Swamiji's visit to Mt. Lowe (pp. 214-6). Then each devotee read a selected quotation from Swami Vivekananda, and 'Murta Maheshwara' was enthusiastically sung. Swami Swahananda then gave a short talk, after which we took a detailed tour of the ruins.

The first thing we saw was a huge, iron wheel which apparently had been used for pulling the cable line. A few yards beyond the iron wheel, there was a cliff which dropped off sharply. At our feet, the railway lines for the funicular cars were still intact. We followed the lines to the cliff edge, at which point they seemed to disappear. Looking over the edge of the cliff, however, we could see where and how the funicular

climbed its last lap to the hotel on a vertical half-mile track named 'The Great Cable Incline.'

Aside from the iron wheel and the railroad ties, there are a few remnants left of the grand hotel—a concrete stairway now leading to nowhere, several walls and foundations. Walking further, we saw the large, concrete tank that served as a water reservoir for the hotel. The inner walls of the reservoir showed signs of decay—time and weather having taken a few chunks out of its interior. A devotee noticed something alive in one of the chunks. Upon closer inspection, we saw two large, dark-brown rattlesnakes curled up in the confines of the ruins.

The view from the ruins was spectacular, even though much of it was covered by the infamous Los Angeles smog. It made us wonder what the view must have been like when Swamiji was there. At that time, there would have been no smog, and fewer buildings. If it had been a clear day, he would have had a breathtaking view all the way to the Pacific Ocean. Looking down now, we could see part of the huge, sprawling city of Los Angeles in soft-focus

through the smog. Near Pasadena, which was also visible in the distance, we noticed a cluster of white-roofed buildings that resembled a city in itself.

This 'city' turned out to be the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, a world-renowned centre for space research. The laboratory is associated with the nearby California Institute of Technology, which has expanded considerably since Swamiji visited and lectured there in 1899. At that time, the institute was a nine-year-old, vocational college called Throop University or Throop Polytechnic Institute. Now, after having had a total of twenty Nobel laureates on its staff through the years, 'Caltech' is a highly prestigious training ground for the country's most brilliant and promising students of science.

Although it was still hot when we left the ruins, the walk back down the mountain was accomplished in half the time and with much less hardship. Arriving at the bottom, we looked back over our shoulders for one last look at Mt. Lowe. Only an hour ago we had been standing on yet another holy spot in California sanctified by the presence of Swami Vivekananda.

THE ORIENT IN AMERICAN TRANSCENDENTALISM

(A Review Article)

[THE ORIENT IN AMERICAN TRANSCENDENTALISM: BY ARTHUR CHRISTY. Published by Columbia University Press, 1932, with four reprintings, the latest in 1978 by Octagon Books, a division of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc. 19 Union Square West, New York, N.Y. 10003, U.S.A. 1978. Pp. xix + 382.]

It may seem a bit odd to be 'reviewing' a book written over a half-century ago. But to us it seems even odder that among us, the American Vedantists, this remarkable pioneering study has remained almost unknown. Published in 1932, the book had

been a doctoral dissertation at Columbia University, revealing thorough mastery of the entire field outlined by its title, though the author was only 33 years old. And it remains today the landmark in that field: the first major study of the Oriental roots

for New England Transcendentalism. The term 'Transcendentalism' is hard to define (cf. footnote 29) : but it centres around the 'Transcendental Club' founded in Boston in 1836 (year of Sri Ramakrishna's birth !). It seems to mean essentially a group of devoted friends—we may say 'companions in sadhana'—the likes of whom we have yet to find anywhere in American history, for their assimilation and practice of Hindu ideals, without the benefit of a human Guru, or a teacher other than the sacred books of the East. Among this group, again, Christy well selected three : Emerson, Thoreau and Bronson Alcott—as being the most representative, both in their influence on the general public¹ and in their love for the Oriental ideals.

In the century preceding Christy's book, dozens of books and hundreds of articles had presented facts and fancies about these Transcendentalists. Yet we fail to find even one among these which shows a balanced attitude towards India as the source for Transcendentalist thought. The nearest, certainly, was Frederic Carpenter's *Emerson and Asia*.² Unfortunately, not only was its scope much more limited than Christy's, but Carpenter seems never to have assimilated—much less sympathized with—the Vedantic testimony, and consistently tended to minimize, if not invalidate it. (Cf. footnote 48).

Of course, reasons for this attitude are at hand. Throughout the ages, Hinduism has rarely proselytized. Even Vivekananda's bold innovation of overseas preaching cannot be called proselytizing. He and his followers have not made 'converts' : they simply yearn to lead us to higher truths, higher insights, which are actually to be

found within our own Faiths, *if* we can get back to their Source. Mainstream Hinduism thus has little concern whether its wondrous discoveries are 'recognized' or not. As Vivekananda put it, Jesus Himself (as compared with His typical 'followers') would say, 'Very well, brother, follow the ideal and advance in your own way. I do not care whether you give me the credit ... or not. I am not a shopkeeper. I do not trade in religion. I teach truth only, and truth is nobody's property. Nobody can patent truth. Truth is God Himself. Go forward.'³

Still, what was to prevent the historians of our Transcendentalists from presenting a fair accounting of their Oriental sources? We need assume no 'conspiracy of silence', nor were there any noted frontal attacks.⁴ The Transcendentalists, concerned with Truth alone were friendly to all, and their sincerity was disarming. But the widespread disinterest, distaste, and often suspicion for Oriental philosophy seems largely an effect of the peculiar 'walling off' of Christendom from 'the East', since Constantine's time down to the Renaissance. Before these Dark Ages there had been centuries of repeated and growing East-West contacts. The Darkness seems mostly to have resulted from Judeo-Christian exclusiveness, in secular alliance with Roman organizing genius.⁵ And the Italian

1. One may note that the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1976) calls Emerson 'The most quoted American in the 20th century press'.

2. Reprinted in 1965 (Haskell House, N.Y. City).

3. Swami Vivekananda, 'Christ, The Messenger', *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1972) vol. 4, p. 150.

4. 'Frontal attacks' were of course plenty for Thoreau, and to some extent Emerson and others in earlier days; these largely evaporated as the greatness of the men became clear, except with Thoreau. His frank and frequent criticism of hypocrisy in high places rankled for over half a century, with resulting postponement of recognition of his many virtues.

5. The term 'Dark Ages' applies mainly to Europe (where most of our Medieval history was written); the remarks about 'walling off'

Renaissance seems largely a breaking through that alliance, back to the *lux ex Oriente* which had never stopped shining!

But the exclusivism died hard—if indeed it ever *did* die. The Italian ‘Renaissance’ seems never to have looked much further East than Greece or Asia Minor. And though with it went some revival of travel and commercial ties with the far East, there is hardly a trace of revival of Indian *thought* in Europe till at least the 18th century. As we shall show, all students of the Transcendentalists before Christy, tended to stress, not the Indian sources of the Transcendental thought, but the ‘representations’ thereof, which had been rediscovered in Europe a century earlier. Coming mainly *via* the Neo-platonists and other liberal, mystical Greek and Alexandrian schools, these teachings covered large areas of Hindu thought.⁶ By the 19th century these thoughts had become rather respectable and acceptable to liberal Western Christianity.⁷

etc. are gross generalizations, omitting for example, disintegration of trade routes, high risks for missionaries and other cultural exchange. But still one must explain the attenuation of the treasures of Oriental wisdom built up in the *previous* millennium. And in this regard the phenomenon of Judeo-Christian exclusivism seems basic. Cf: Huston Smith, *The Religions of Man* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965) pp. 267ff. and 286ff for definitive summary of the origin and consequences of the concept of ‘The Chosen People’. As he says, ‘How odd of God to choose the Jews!’ (p. 290).

6. Cf. Christy, *The Orient in American Transcendentalism* (the book under review) pp. 49-51. Also Swami Ashokananda, *Influence of Indian Thought on the Thought of the West* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1931) pages 26ff, specially as to the Raja Yoga.

7. ‘Respectable’, *i.e.* as compared to the Vedanta itself! It seems obvious that informed Christian devotees since earliest times must have feared any approach to Indian religions—at least as threat to their beliefs in once-for-all Incarnation, vicarious Atonement, hell for

Still, how long could the roots of Oriental thought remain thus hidden? All the revolutionary tendencies in 19th century science were fostering among Christians doubt and investigation, which inevitably included rays from the East! And in America this appeared first and most notably in New England, home of the lineal and spiritual descendants of the boldest Western seekers of Light. Further, as Christy notes, the remarkable group in Concord, Massachusetts, ‘was a unique entity, representative of Transcendentalism as a whole’.⁸ And among them, the three on whom Christy focusses (Emerson, Thoreau, and Alcott) were outspoken about their debt to India and the East. Yet even they tended more and more to minimize direct references to India,⁹ since these often led to sharp criticism, even from good friends. As they grew older, learning more of human nature’s adamant resistance to change, this tendency increased. Like Vivekananda, they sought Truth, with scant concern for its label. Even today our Swamis advise devotees who have responsibilities in the world: ‘Sure, tell the truth to all; but without need to say where you found it, unless you know the hearers will appreciate!’

Thus almost a century passed before any major work undertook to get back to the facts in question. As Christy puts it: ‘As yet (1932) there does not exist a single comprehensive study of the Oriental influence on Occidental thought.’¹⁰ Again,

infidels, etc. Even the miracles would have to go: India’s Yogis could equal any such, even resurrection from the dead.

8. Christy, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

9. Similarly their reference to Persia, China, etc.; but these usually were more acceptable to Yankees in those days.

10. Christy, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-49. He proceeds to praise Carpenter’s ‘valuable pioneering work’: (cf: footnote no. 2)...‘the only book devoted to the subject in the American field..’

he carefully outlines the limitations of his own study and quotes a remarkable passage from Romain Rolland:¹¹ 'It would be a matter of deep interest to know exactly how far the American spirit had been impregnated, directly or indirectly, by the infiltration of Hindu thought during the XIXth century ...' Christy continues, 'This book may be considered as an attempt to write the first chapter of the general study Rolland suggests ...'¹²

As it happened, Christy's 'first chapter ...' was so well done that we do not find anything approaching its value until, recently, another remarkable book came to our notice. This is Carl T. Jackson's *The Oriental Religions and American Thought—Nineteenth Century Explorations*.¹³ This obviously has a much broader scope. Yet, as noted at the outset, the half-century since 1932 has seen but scanty attention to

but obviously not 'comprehensive'. We may add that the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1976) in its approximately 3,600 words on Emerson, had not a word on India, or Hinduism, etc.; nor in its major article on Transcendentalism. Still, by 1976 comes a ray of light: the word 'Hindu' appears... just once!

¹¹. In 'America at the Time of Vivekananda's First Visit' *Prabuddha Bharata* (May 1930) (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama) p. 224. at the very start of the article by Rolland.

¹². Christy, op. cit., p. vii.

¹³. Greenwood Press, Westport, Conn, and London, 1981. On pages 45-46 he refers to '... Christy, who did more than any other scholar to launch the modern investigation of Asian influences in American history...' We must of course note a few other studies: (1) Rao-Rayopati, *Early American Interest in Vedanta* (Asia Publishing House, 1973); (2) Riepe, *Philosophy of India and Its Impact on American Thought* (Illinois: Chas. Thomas Co. Springfield 1970); (3) Paul Carter, *Spiritual Crisis of the Gilded Age* (Northern Illinois University Press, 1971). But the first seems nowhere near so carefully done as Christy's, often giving opinions instead of facts; the second seems prone to inaccuracies; the last, though nicely done, covers only the era 1865-1895.

Christy's work among us, the Vedantists. Most of our alert and learned acquaintances, including several who themselves have written on our Vedantic heritage, have hardly heard mention of Christy, despite the four reprintings of his work (cf. footnote 1). By contrast, Wendell Thomas' *Hinduism Invades America*—like Christy's, started as doctoral dissertation at Columbia (1930).¹⁴ But as it deals almost wholly with post-Vivekananda America, it refers only rarely to the subject.

Here lies a clue to our faint and tardy appreciation of a work like Christy's. Do the American Vedantins really *care* to know what happened in this benighted hemisphere before 1893? It is a perfectly natural tendency to think, 'obviously our Hero (Vivekananda) had the power to bring about the whole wonderful change since then; so why bother with the feeble struggles which preceded him?'¹⁵ Christy's book itself would be sufficient answer; but one further less-known study should be mentioned here, viz. Swami Ashokananda's booklet *The Influence of Indian Thought on the Thought of the West*.¹⁶ It was published just before the Swami came to the West. He was working as the Editor of our *Prabuddha Bharata* through 1930s. The booklet was based on another passage in Rolland's book. In this passage Rolland seemed to contradict himself urging,¹⁷ 'I

¹⁴. Published by Beacon Press, New York, 1930.

¹⁵. Josephine MacLeod ('Tantine') said of Swamiji's stature: 'Men like Kaiser Wilhelm were so big that in their presence all others looked small. Swamiji was so big that he made others look bigger.' Surely, then to discover *bigness* in Vivekananda's predecessors, will make him, who still towers above them, look bigger still!

¹⁶. See footnote no. 6. It seems clear that Christy had never heard of this.

¹⁷. As quoted by Ashokananda, in the above booklet, page 6.

do not think that in India or any other country there has ever been the origin of a divine revelation. I give the honour for it to God who is in every living being. He alone is the source In face of the Eternal there can be no question of priority ...' Such lines from Romain Rolland seemed to confuse his proposition we quoted earlier (cf. footnote 11, as we have noted above, Swami Ashokananda was then the Editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*) regarding his 'deep interest' in 'the infiltration of Hindu thought during the nineteenth century'! Then, with all due respect for Rolland's genius and friendship for India, the Swami proceeds in 40 pages, to outline, not one century merely, but the entire sweep of history including the history since Greece and Persia in Buddhist times. And with it he masterfully documents in his own thesis :

It is true that when one realizes the truth, one realizes it *oneself* and not by proxy... But... even in such individual realizations, outside help... is largely necessary.... The fact that certain truths are potential in a man does not preclude the possibility of his being helped by others in discovering them.... Considering the anti-spiritual ideas that fill the human mind and... lower nature, outside help seems absolutely necessary.... All have the Divinity within them, but all do not realize It.... The Divine Truth is extremely difficult of access... the Eternal has created men with their senses all going outward and therefore they... do not see the Self within... The 'natural' tendency of human mind is to revel in the objective life... It has taken thousands of years for certain peoples to conceive the necessity of reversing the 'natural' tendency... Stern discipline has been necessary.... I beg to differ from Mr. Rolland. The Vedantic is not the 'natural' thought for mankind. When through a reversal of the natural process, through self-discipline and deep faith... men turn... inward, take to Nivritti,... then the higher nature of man asserts itself, and then only the Vedantic thought appears natural to them, if of course there has been also the necessary intellectual development and change of outlook...¹⁸

18. Ashokananda, op. cit., pp. 6-9.

Here the Swami brilliantly outlines the need for this change of outlook : nowhere have we found a better *apologia* for ourselves in attempting to trace such 'intellectual' helps from India. It seems clear that Christy never saw this (or any other) work of Ashokananda's ; if he had, we are quite sure he would have been more benefited. Not that he *needed* confirmation of his own deep sense of the worthwhileness of tracing out the Orient in American Transcendentalism. But he was careful to point out the limitations of mere book-knowledge. From his Preface :

The Concord [Transcendentalist] approach was...the approach of the poet and mystic... Now it is a difficult task to account for the dreams and ecstasies of mystics. They are men who crush the centuries as the sections of a telescope, and staunchly declare that they must get beyond time and space and rely more on intuition than reason...' (pp. viii-ix).

—to his Conclusion

Emersonian thought was...almost pure mysticism. Men may have to it by recognition, but never by conviction. It was a religious instinct that spoke through the Concordians, and only those who had ears to hear could receive...It was not essentially a new departure in literature such as the Romantic Movement which Wordsworth and Coleridge represented...It was, rather, a peculiarly blended religious and philosophical approach to life.¹⁹

—Christy lays respectful stress on this mysticism, which takes one beyond all books. 'The highest beatitude which the mystic can seek is the perfection of the spiritual sense which will enable him to see and know nothing but God as The Essence interpenetrating all matter ... the oneness of subject and object, of substance and shadow ...'²⁰ And, time and again, Christy shows or implies that Vedanta was

19. Christy, op. cit., pp. 266-7.

20. Ibid., p. 92.

the source of most such insights among the New England Transcendentalists. For example :

This use of many of the cardinal doctrines of the Vedanta as an expression of his own beliefs, is the most interesting feature of Emerson's Orientalism. And the first...parallel is that of Brahma and the Over-Soul....Now the human mind has never produced an idealism as extreme as that of the Vedanta, which would insist that the Absolute God is as much in picadilly Circus as in the most immaculate madonna.²¹

As it happens, Christy had already summed up for us (page 73) the value both of mystic contemplation and outer help : 'He (Emerson) felt that the wisest investment of life was ... in making up his own Bible by hearkening to the voice within ... in the nursery rhyme as well as the classics of the world ...'²² He continues quoting Emerson (about 'these spiritual log-books')²³. 'When the intervals of darkness come ... when the sun is hid and the stars withdraw ... we repair to the lamps which were

²¹. Ibid., p. 74. Here 'Picadilly Circus' (standing for vulgarity) is in refutation of a jibe by G. K. Chesterton. The reader will note that, throughout, we minimize the part of Thoreau in all this, since the 'Profiles in Greatness' ('Thoreau—the First Sannyasin of America') in *Prabuddha Bharata*, for March, 1985 has largely covered his part.

²². Elsewhere, Christy stresses Emerson and Thoreau's 'borrowing' quotations, 'in no stealthy or shame-faced way...but proudly... bravely...' (pp. 3-5, and others).

²³. 'Log-books' refers presumably to Journals and other writings of mystics. Obviously here again is paradox: cf. Emerson's classic remark, 'a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds', i.e., many of the greatest mystics never wrote, rarely even spoke; thus their teaching and influence *can* spread without outer helps. Yet our Transcendentalists learned so much from outer helps; indeed if it were not so, we in turn would hardly know of them! (Note. footnotes nos. 22 & 23 are both from p. 73 of the book).

kindled by their ray, to guide our steps to the East again ...'

By now it is clear that Emerson, Thoreau, Alcott and their friends were *eclectic* in their seeking. This, of course, led to considerable criticism. We, too, are likely to be reminded of the Brahmo Samaj—often compared to a bouquet of flowers without roots (i.e. in some Great Soul)—or one of our Community Churches which usually have a Unitarian nucleus but elements from many other great religions. We, being fortunate to have come upon a Great Soul (Ramakrishna) who had both great intensity (depth) and breadth enough for any Eclectic, can well agree with Tulsidas, 'Sit with all, take the sweetness of all, say "Yea, Yea" to all; but keep your own seat firm.'

But for Emerson and friends, most of their theological roots (or 'seats') were being shattered by modern science, historical research etc. Thus, while holding firmly to the grand moral, ethical roots in Puritanism, they simply *had* to be eclectic as to metaphysics and resulting dogmas.²⁴ And as they had no Ramakrishna to turn to, while the shining light of Jesus was for them near-hidden under conventional 'Christianity', their discoveries of new roots had to be in the realm of the Impersonal.

Naturally, Christy, having little acquaintance with Sri Ramakrishna's teaching²⁵ praises the eclecticism—even what was often smiled at as 'borrowing' (pp. 3 to 6),

²⁴. Now we can clarify the paradox noted in footnote 23 and related texts; viz. Emerson's 'voice within' was wonderfully responsive to voices from without; the Inner Light shone best on things or ideas attuned to it. Cf. Rolland's well-known words on the electric-shock-like effect of Vivekananda's words on him.

²⁵. We find only one mention of either Ramakrishna or Vivekananda in the whole book (pp. 269-70 and that is of Ramakrishna's worship of all—even street-walkers—as Mother's manifestation. (quoted from Max Muller).

'nibbling', etc. And though, as a Christian, Christy must have been saddened that they were so far from Jesus, he never suggests criticism of their search, nor of their absence of much personal devotion to Kṛṣṇa and other Avatars. But in his admirable description of the charm of the *Gītā* for the Concordians,²⁶ he stresses 'the new concept of *bhakti* or loving devotion' to this 'God (Kṛṣṇa) who participated actively in the affairs of the world ...' (Here he mentions particularly *Bhāgavad-Gītā*, IV, 6-8, as to the Lord's descent to mankind when need arises). Further, quoting *Gītā* (IX : 33-34) he notes, 'The invitation accorded to Arjuna even had possibilities of Christian interpretation ...' And he goes on to stress the *Gita's* stress on eclecticism, for which reason 'few books could have been more congenial to the Concordians.'²⁷

So, we emerge from this heart-warming book with a clear picture of what is doubtless the most remarkable outcropping²⁸ of the Vedanta outside India. Of course there have been recurring spontaneous appearances of Vedanta in its universal sense such as Meister Eckhart and his friends, Brother Lawrence, the Quakers, and others as suggested by Rolland (cf. footnote 16). But there had no known written or verbal access to Hindu ideas; and our concern is

26. See, e.g. Christy's admirable outline of the prompt and joyous discovery of the Bhagavad-Gita by the Transcendentalists (pp. 23-29). Here as throughout, the facts are readily confirmable, if we take time to search; but Christy was the first to put them together in readable form.

27. It seems they at once grasped the eclecticism found in the *Gita*; whereas, even in India, dozens of sects still do not.

28. That is, one which without benefit of even visits to India (no Transcendentalist went till at least 1883)—and based mainly on the scriptures of India.

only to elucidate and document the *tangible* helps which came from India.

Now, what is this picture we get from Christy? Like Emerson and friends, he does not attempt to define 'Transcendentalism'²⁹: none of them were system-makers—much less sect-makers—and in his closely-woven conclusion, Christy stresses 'mysticism ... religious instinct ... a peculiarly blended religious and philosophical approach to life.' (cf. footnote 19 and related text). He continues (pages 267-8) to outline that 'blending' to include many seeming contradictions, 'the contradiction of monism and dualism ... the fruit of the mystical temperament ... metaphysical thinking ... an unusual dash of the urbane Primarily neither a body ... of truths, but a "technique whereby truth may be discovered"'. Further, quoting Emerson: 'I have very good grounds for being a Unitarian and a Trinitarian too. I need not nibble forever at one loaf, but eat it and thank God for it, and earn another.' Our readers will be reminded of Sri Ramakrishna's parable of the cow who gobbles all sorts of food, as giving the richest milk! And Christy continues (in startling parallel of Vivekananda's ideal): 'In the capacious natures of Emerson, Thoreau and Alcott, there was room for the expansion and alertness of the West as well as the concentration and serenity of the East ...' But Christy gravely warns not to imagine any similarity between this Truth-based Eclecticism and the many Oriental 'cults' which have lately 'invaded America'. Here Christy refers to Wendel Thomas' *Hinduism Invades America*. (cf. footnote no. 14) Thomas, after giving a fine collection of data on such cults gives a vivid description of the Ramakrishna Mission and puts it far beyond all 'cults'.

29. Nor does Carl Jackson (op. cit. cf. footnote 13) or other obvious source-book.

We may also mention that Jacob Needleman, contemporary American psychologist writes of the Ramakrishna Movement in his book *The New Religions* :

When considering the Indian influence in America, a special place must be reserved to the Vedanta Societies throughout the country. Historically, Vedanta Society was the first Eastern religious tradition that took root on our soil, having been brought here late in the 19th century by Swami Vivekananda, the chief disciple of the great Indian Master, Sri Ramakrishna. Intellectually, the influence of this form of Vedanta has been enormous. It was because of the *American Vedantists* numbering some of the best minds of our time that the East was first taken seriously here, and though, when compared to more recent movements, it now seems sedate, its activities constitute a very wide and solidly based spiritual discipline....

.... Vedanta Society has been with us for sometime, and has more or less blended with the foliage of the American culture.³⁰

Christy's warning of 'cult' is indeed needed ; it reminds us, as often throughout this book, of Vivekananda's Herculean efforts to assimilate the 'best of the West with the best of the East'—vast breadth with tremendous intensity—so that man can 'put his whole soul upon that one point of love' and yet be 'unattached'.³¹ And it was one of the many strong points of our Transcendentalists, that despite their 'nibbling' tendencies, which Vivekananda often scolded, they remained notably free from '... the vagaries of modern Orientally inspired prophets ... contemplating the navel in sumptuously upholstered ... salons under the guidance of a tutor who will return home a veritable Croesus, or the attendants at lectures for the disconsolate and mentally unemployed'³²

30. Jacob Needleman, *The New Religions* (New York: Garden City Doubleday and Co., 1970) p. 213 and p. 8.

31. *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, (1976) vol. 2, p. 4.

32. Christy, op. cit., p. 269.

And here we come back to the question of 'roots'. Our Concord stalwarts seemed to have lost their roots in any form of Christianity and could hardly claim tangible 'roots' in a distant land none of them ever saw.³³

But it is by now clear that they did retain vital roots in the real religion of Jesus, and especially the teachings and realizations of Jonathan Edwards, 'the greatest of the Puritans'. In an era when religious cults, 'Christian communes', 'Revivals', 'Camp Meetings', etc. were rising and most of them rotting fast³⁴, the entire Transcendentalist group remained high above all serious criticism as to moral standards, and devotion to Truth alone. As a distinguished critic³⁵ who often referred to Emerson as bigoted, dogmatic, inexperienced, etc. puts it : 'he would find no difficulty in entering any kingdom of heaven ...' We have outlined³⁶ Thoreau's clear record—amidst the bitterest of criticisms earned by his perhaps over-zealous criticisms of others, none ever dared deny his purity, chastity,

33. It does seem peculiar that the Britishers, who did much to spread Indian culture and religious ideas (as individuals, usually in the face of opposition from the Empire officials) never, before 1893 at least, produced any such Group as the Concord one, i.e. none which stressed practice, self-discipline, etc. on Hindu lines. There are reasons for this ; space forbids discussion here.

34. Cf. Gilber Seldes, *The Stammering Century* (New York: Harper & Row, 1928 and 1965)—a fine study of these religious phenomena ; which has little except praise for the Concord group, incidentally a deep appreciation for the lasting effects of Jonathan Edwards and the great Puritans, on the Transcendentalists. And no criticism for the various other groups sharing genuine Hindu teachings.

35. Charles Eliot Norton (in Christy, op. cit., pp. 119-20) with much appreciative criticism here added, as to Emerson's fitness for 'kingdom of heaven'.

36. See footnote no. 21 (our 'Profiles in Greatness').

or truthfulness, etc. And after three years of reading through major source-books, we have yet to find any significant mention of deviations from the straight and narrow path among others of the Group.

But see now, how close to home we're coming! Is not this the position of most of us, the newly-come Vedantists, whose view of 'Christianity' had become so dim—largely made up of dogmatic, refurbished Sunday lectures, 'Sunday-School' picnics, mass-singing of 'hymns' which appeal more to the feet than the head ... and all for a Christ who they say was really human, humble, long-suffering but, long since got free passage to 'Heaven' where we all are busy bowing down to Him. Yet who among us could escape the wonderful impact of His words—as Rolland said of Vivekananda's, 'like electric shocks'—if and when we hear or read them without all these overlays? Can we not feel the life flowing back into our roots? And how much more when we begin to assimilate Vivekananda's and Ramakrishna's assurance that He *was* God? But these Concord folk seem to have clung to the heart of Jesus' teachings, boldly discarding the nonessentials, especially the eschatology (eternal flames for many!), and doctrines such as Original Sin, Salvation by Faith (e.g. in the Blood of the Lamb), etc. In short, we conclude, that they discarded most of the metaphysics and kept the psychology, (the virtues, the disciplines, the Path).

This distinction seems basic; and Christy frequently alludes to it. One may recall our stress on 'a technique whereby truth may be discovered' (cf. footnote 30 and related text). Further, in describing Emerson's eclectic use of texts from the Orient (page 73) Christy writes: 'He turned to them as a religious psychologist, not as a metaphysician ...' Again (p. 114) quoting Emerson (in a passage to us suggestive of Vivekananda): 'The problem

of restoring to the world, original and eternal beauty is solved by the redemption of the soul. The ruin or blank that we see when we look at Nature is in our own eye ... is because man is disunited with himself.'

Christy was so impressed with this that he again quotes it when summarizing his section on Emerson's debt to Vedanta (p. 123); and continues, 'The veil of Maya must be pierced. Men must be shown that they are one ...' Obviously this is a task for the highest psychology.

Much more could be added as to Christy's handling of the importance of psychology; but when combined with his insight into the Transcendentalists' basic mysticism, their eclectic breadth and roots in the Puritan virtues, we begin to glimpse his achievement: he writes as a balanced, widely-read scholar who, at so young an age, had come to love and appreciate almost the entire range of Hindu thought. And his later works show that he grew to similar appreciation of the thought of all humanity.³⁷

We have noted that, like most authors, Christy did not try to define 'Transcendentalism'; again, being concerned with only three of the great Transcendentalists, he makes only passing references to the 'Group' in and around Concord. We have called them 'the most remarkable out-cropping ...' simply because we have so far come across none to compare with them.

37. His later works include: *The Asian Legacy and American Life* and (with Henry W. Wells), *World Literature: An Anthology of Human Experience*. Death took him in 1946 (aged 47); but he had worked steadily and carefully, while planning 'clearly and audaciously' towards more and more comprehensive studies of the human mind at its best. Several of those plans were well carried out by others. (Based on data supplied by Dr. Carl T. Jackson, Cf. footnote 13).

Christy, not being a 'Vedantist'³⁸ could scarcely have reason to make such comparisons; but from start to finish he helps buttress the fact.³⁹

Further, he routinely refers to the 'friends' among this group in Concord; and from all sides come evidences of the warmth of this friendship. As we have noted that like Emerson, most, if not all, of the group would find ready access to 'any kingdom of Heaven', in the highest sense of the word. Of course Emerson—who seems to have made nothing *but* friends—may at times *seem* bit stiff and moralistic; but never the 'prickly' Thoreau or the endlessly spend-thrift, helpful, childlike enthusiast, Alcott.

We may add a little-known detail on which we stumbled last summer during a memorable visit to the shrines at Concord. Having chanced on the fact that none of Thoreau's brothers and sisters ever left their parents' home,⁴⁰ we asked the head librarian of the Concord Library if this was literally true. She at once said: 'Certainly; and don't think this was a rarity! Concord is really a family-town.' Our readers will of course be reminded of the Indian 'joint-family' tradition. And in this light, the entire Transcendentalist group does bear some resemblance to a big 'family'. Not

only are there few attempts to define it; even Encyclopedia Britannica mentions it only casually as 'the Transcendentalist Club, founded in Boston in 1836.' (Another nice coincidence with Sri Ramakrishna's advent!). But we hear of the 'officers'—although Emerson seems accepted as its guiding spirit; no 'platform', although several of the group were very active in public-reform movements. And, best and rarest of all, we hear of no serious quarrels or splits!

And here we come back to our stress on 'religious psychology'. It is simply another way of describing the difference between 'Orient' and 'the West'—inner versus outer, etc. Ramakrishna was never tired of repeating, 'bondage and liberation is of the mind alone'. Vivekananda likewise summarized:⁴¹ 'Psychology, they all (Hindu sages) take for granted, is a perfect science . . . All the fight has been regarding philosophy—the nature of the soul and all that.' Even more practically he quoted Jesus' beatitude: "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." In that one sentence is the gist of all religions . . . it could save the world, were all the other scriptures lost.⁴² And, clearly, becoming 'pure in heart' is wholly within the field of psychology!

On this point, our three Transcendentalists were unusually close. They loved differences, even self-contradictions. (We are reminded of Emerson's famous 'A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds'.); but the above-mentioned un-structured nature of their Group reflects their firm bent towards improving—purifying, strengthening—individuals, as against political or missionary or other pressure-group concern. On this point, again, their biographers, up till Christy, have been lamentable vague: some indeed amuse themselves by futile

38. Born in China, of Christian missionary parents, he seems to have had great breadth of vision from the start.

39. E.g. Half of his careful conclusions detail the influence of Thoreau on Gandhi, plus tributes of Indian leaders to Emerson. See also footnote 45. Of course, one must remember that the Theosophists—specially Col. Olcott and Annie Besant, received even more praise from Indians; but this was mainly for socio-political help and uplift-work. Our readers need no reminders as to certain (non-Vedantic) peculiarities in their philosophy!

40. Nor ever married, though Henry and a brother both courted a fine lady, who had to refuse both in view of her orthodox Puritan background. (The Thoreau's were a bit radical!) Cf. our 'Profile' on Thoreau (footnote. 21 above).

41. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*.

42. *Ibid*.

psycho-analytic attempts, e.g. to 'explain' Thoreau's life-long celibacy, or Emerson's insistence on 'turning his eyes towards the bright', the 'optimistic' side of things.⁴³ Yet Christy, as throughout, sets these peculiarities in firm religious context. In fact, the more peculiar they seem to Westerners, the more firmly he shows their Oriental rationale!

This 'optimistic' attitude of Emerson and his friends has often been attacked as 'Ivory Tower' or at least 'Romanticist'; but Christy as usual takes it to the highest level (pp. 113 ff.)—'the origin of sin and evil'—i.e. the 'problem of Evil' in philosophy. After turning back the many barbs and gibes from foes and friends, Christy summarizes:

All Emerson's Hindu-like premises converge to explain his optimism.... He saw evil and he suffered pain, but they could not touch him. His faith in the reality of the ideal world was so fundamental that even the loss of a bride and his first-born in a brief time left no deep scar. When he could thus rise above the cruelest evils...it was no blindness to pain and suffering... His optimism...is a most persistent type of therapeutics.⁴⁴

Thus we are led back to Emerson's 'technique whereby truth may be discovered ...' (p. 268). By now it is clear that Christy's tendency is to seek how, and

how much, the Orient had *changed the lives* of the Transcendentalists. In our 'Profile' of Thoreau (footnote 21) we relied heavily on Christy in documenting Thoreau's thoroughgoing *practice* of whatever he came to believe. By contrast, Emerson, under whom Thoreau 'put foundations' of practice, may have seemed a bit theoretical and literary. But Christy repeatedly stresses Emerson's zeal for the disciplines of purification. In Ramakrishna's terms, he could have called it a zeal for 'God realization'.⁴⁵ So with most, if not all, the leading Transcendentalists having no external 'props' to restrict them (creeds, rituals, missionarizing etc.) They were essentially a group of companions in *sadhana*!⁴⁶

But now we're getting *really* close to home. The further one learns about this remarkable group, the more they begin to appear like spiritual brothers and sisters in our struggles for attaining perfection. And all this they did without depending on external helps like a Church or a teacher. Hence all our efforts in trying to harmonize our Yankee background⁴⁷ with the various

43. Cf. Christy, op. cit., p. 118, etc.

44. Christy, op. cit., p. 121. Here, Christy may have missed a few important data. Sri Vinay Lal, a graduate student at the University of Chicago, has done a brilliant study on 'Emerson and India' (Thesis for 'M.A.' at Johns Hopkins University, 1982) documenting especially this question of Emerson's (plus most Transcendentalists') 'optimism'. Emerson lost not only 'bride and first-born...' but two well-loved brothers. And all these suggestions as to 'Ivory Tower', and 'looking above' evil, Sri Lal shows as integral parts of Emerson's Vedantic trend. Even in Hindu classic drama there simply *cannot* be a permanent tragedy! Sri Lal has been of great help with advice on the present report; his further studies are worth watching!

45. Space precludes documenting this personal *practice* (not mere 'beliefs') further, now. Vinay Lal (cf. footnote 44) adds much to what Christy gives; Christy's is still the best account 'in print', to our knowledge.

46. Of course, aside from Thoreau, the others rarely seem to have engaged in any of India's outer devotional or 'Yoga' practices. But one cannot any longer doubt that they were in many ways Jñāna-yogis and/or Karma-yogis!

47. Remember: peaceful Concord had been the site of the 'shot heard round the world' (Emerson's famous phrase) which initiated the American Revolution. And Thoreau was a fearless devotee of John Brown—the most violent of the Abolitionists. Perry Miller (as quoted in our 'Profile', cf. footnote 21) well calls this inner struggle between Eastern and Western traditions, the 'Romantic Irony'—and assumes there is no real solution; but Christy clearly outlines problem *and* solution.

Eastern traditions, now seem mild in comparison with the 'Transcendentalists' inner torments and transports in the absence of any guidance except from the sacred books and God Himself.

Thus Christy stands as both pioneer and permanent map-maker or guide⁴⁸ for us,

48. Particularly in regard to *sadhana*. None of our sources before Christy—and few if any since him until Carl Jackson shows more than casual mention of this impact of Orient on men's lives. Frederick Carpenter (cf. footnote 2) seems

'the American Vedantins'. So far, none has done better the task he took on, the task of bringing the light from the East to our path. And those who have since broadened this field of study seem all to have built on his work.

intent on keeping all data in the realm of theory... speculation... or at best 'the fascination of' the Orient. One entire chapter is entitled 'Mine Asia'—simply a term of endearment Emerson used for his wife!

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

Terrorism Today

Terrorism has evolved itself as the latest lethal game in the field of world politics. If guerrilla warfare showed us the first steps of clandestine attacks on enemies, today's terrorism has shown us how brutally, frustrated political anger or religious fanaticism can kill innocent persons.

In the early September of 1986 Pan American World Airways Flight 73 had touched down before dawn at Pakistan's Karachi International Airport. Eighteen hours later the 747 Jumbo jet still stood on the tarmac, but by then at least 17 of the plane's estimated 400 passengers and crew members were dead. About 125 were injured, some critically. All these were victims of a hijacking-drama.

Terrorist attacks have plagued the world's airlines for more than 15 years. The hijacking in 1985 of TWA Flight 847 to Beirut, lasted 17 days. Fortunately it resulted in the death of only one passenger.

A group of radical Lebanese Shi'ites in June 1985 commandeered another aircraft after it had departed from Athens. Of the original 153 passengers and crew aboard one person was killed.

Four Palestinians, armed with Soviet-made submachine-guns and hand grenades, in October 1985 seized the Mediterranean cruise liner with more than 499 passengers and crew aboard. One passenger was murdered in the attack.

In July 1983 a Jumbo jet bound from Shiraz

in southwestern Iran to Tehran was hijacked with 386 passengers aboard by six rebellious Iranians. No passengers were harmed.

In December 1985, three Arab terrorists diverted a Boeing 737 to Malta. After a commando raid 58 of the 79 hostages left on the plane died. More than 40 were killed by burns or smoke inhalation from the fires that commando attack ignited, and another eight by bombs the hijackers threw. Commando operation in most cases miserably failed.

The most successful commando raid was staged in 1977, when West German forces rescued 86 passengers and crew from a Lufthansa jet that had been diverted by hijackers to Mogadishu, Somalia. No commandos or hostages were killed in the attack.

Dr. David Hubbard, an American consultant on terrorism says, 'The record shows that when commandos storm aircraft the number of people killed increases. If the terrorists don't kill them, the security forces do.'

In an address at Harvard University, American Secretary of State, George Shultz described such terrorism as a new form of 'vanquished barbarisms of our time.'

Recent terrorist killings in Punjab—between 500 and 700 under the current political regime—have belied the faintest hope of the greatest optimists. These gruesome killings are the spine-chilling headlines of Indian dailies for the last one year. Increasingly these killings are becom-

ing bolder, and more brutal. In a village near Amritsar, the three sons of a family were gunned down in cold blood. The teenage college-going only son of Amritsar's Superintendent of Police was shot outside his classroom.

The savage terrorist killing of 24 bus passengers on November 30 last year in Bhagol Khurd, small village in Punjab's Hoshiarpur district, sent a shock-wave of fear and resentment in the entire nation. Frightened onlookers had stood dumbfounded just 200 yards away as three revolvers and a stengun spewed death inside the bus. The four killers escaped on scooters.

As shooting and arrests of suspects went up, so did terrorist killings.

Where is the end of the road? Most of these terrorist attacks either on land or in airways are backed by a sinister zeal of religious fundamentalism. In such cases of outrageous

fanaticism inspired by a theological dogmatism, 'God is a monster' and 'Religious leaders must be violent minded', as historian Toynbee has shown in his book *A Historian's Approach to Religion*. 'Religious conflict', he says, 'is a public nuisance which easily becomes a public danger'. Any country or nation which wishes to gain advantage by encouraging terrorists over others is only waiting for the nemesis of history. The moral order in Shakespeare's universe spared neither Macbeth nor Iago. When shall we take the lesson from Sri Ramakrishna—'As many faiths, so many paths'? But before entering into any training in religious pluralism, it is imperative at this moment that heads of the states should combine together and put an 'international pressure' on factors, 'political or religious', that breed terrorism which kills both good and bad alike with a blind stupidity of Schopenhauer's will.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

BEGIN THE DAY WITH GOD. Pp. 167. Rs. 20.
I HAVE NEED OF YOU. Pp. 117. Rs. 60
LIFE AFTER DEATH. Pp. 96. Rs. 10.

All the above books by J. P. VASWANI. Published by Gita Publishing House, 10, Sadhu Vaswani Path, Poona 411 011, Maharashtra.

Many of the readers of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* may remember a Sindhi youth by name Hirananda whom Sri Ramakrishna loved dearly and held in high regard. The Master's intuition was infallible and, although Sadhu Hirananda died prematurely, he influenced a number of young people in Sind, the foremost of whom was Sadhu T. L. Vaswani. After a brilliant academic and teaching career, Sadhu T. L. Vaswani renounced the world and dedicated his life to spreading the message of divine love and purity and to the education of girls. He was undoubtedly one of the leading spiritual lights of India during the middle of this century. After his passing away his mantle of spiritual leadership fell on his worthy disciple and nephew Dada J. P. Vaswani. A charismatic, gentle personality who has built his life on the bedrock of purity and discipline, Dada Vaswani has, like his mentor, dedicated his life to the service of the poor and the suffering. For more than a decade

he has been constantly touring in different parts of India and the world spreading the message of love, peace and devotion.

The first book *Begin the Day with God* is a collection of Dada J. P. Vaswani's mature reflections and exhortations arranged in the form of a diary. Though of the nature of the spontaneous outpourings of his heart, these thoughts provide valuable insights into the spiritual aspects of life.

The second book *I have Need of You* is a collection of poems on spiritual themes which have a delightful naivete and charm. They reveal the depth of devotion and purity of Dada J. P. Vaswani. Both the books are printed beautifully and should serve as ideal gifts, especially for young people.

In the last book *Life after Death* Dada J. P. Vaswani presents with remarkable clarity certain vital pieces of information which most people would find very helpful in orientating themselves to life after death. The author shows that death is a door to a richer, fuller, more beautiful life. This is an interesting presentation of both modern ideas on post-mortem survival and traditional ideas on the immortality of the soul.

S.B.

BHAGAVAD GITA: TRANS. AND COMM. By R. GOTSCHALK. Published by Motilal Banarsidass, Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 009, 1985. Pp. xvi + 245. Rs. 100/-

The *Bhagavadgītā* is one of the very few ancient texts that have been treated as 'contemporary'. The present form of the text is found in the commentary of Samkara (788-820 A.D.), and his is the earliest available commentary on the poem. Various *ācāryas* and scholars have used the *Gītā* to expound their own philosophical doctrines through their comments and notes on it. In the present-century India the commentaries of Tilak and Gandhi helped to awaken faith and power in the minds of the people who had been under the yoke of foreign rule.

Scholars in other countries have also paid rich tributes to the *Gītā*. Several of them have devoted major parts of their life to the study and understanding of this work. Garbe, Otto, Edgerton, Zaehner and others have made notable contribution to the exposition of the message of the *Gītā*.

The work under review is a fresh English translation of the poem with a commentary (chapter-wise) by Dr. Richard Gotschalk who has taught courses on the text for many years in the Pennsylvania State University, USA. His translation has some variations from those provided by Radhakrishnan, Zaehner and others. The reason for a fresh translation is the translator's conviction that in a translation the accuracy of meaning provided by the linguistic and literary elements of the poem should not be sacrificed for the sake of interpretation. Dr. Gotschalk has sought accurate expression of the meaning and thought of Kṛṣṇa-Arjuna dialogue. He has also paid special attention to the dramatic elements, right down to the epithets used of each other by the speakers. As no translation can avoid being also interpretative, the present translator has appended a commentary in order to make explicit what remains involved in the translation. What is articulated most centrally in the text (as the revelation in the eleventh chapter suggests) is Time in its bearing upon human life as an active affair, an affair of commitment to activity in which there is something at stake.

According to Dr. Gotschalk, the dialogical whole of the *Gītā* is rooted in the concrete situation narrated by Sañjaya to King Dhritarastra. The main dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna upholds, in a dramatic way, the perennial problems of man's station in life and its duties.

The thoughtful articulation of the problem of human existence can always provide appropriate beginning-points in a historical recall within which the crisis of the present-day world can be discussed and discerned. The author also affirms that the teaching of the *Gītā*, like that of the epic *Mahābhārata*, is an inclusive one, and Hindus belonging to various sects find most of their basic beliefs acknowledged and affirmed by the statements of the text.

Dr. Gotschalk has provided exhaustive notes to explicate the various terms and concepts in the text. The detailed index of themes and ideas, epithets and subjects is very helpful to the student of the *Gītā*.

The work is a masterly attempt to study the text in minutest detail. It is to be regarded as a mile-stone in the history of *Gītā* studies.

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BENGALI

VIVEKANANDA SISYA SARAT CHANDRER JIVANI O RACHANAVALI (Bengali): Published by Brahmapada Chakravarty, 15/1 Surya Sen Street, Calcutta 700 012. Available at Vivekananda Society, 151 Vivekananda Road, Calcutta 700 006. 1984. Pp. ix + 290. Rs. 20.

Sri Sarat Chandra Chakravarty was one of the illustrious lay disciples of Swami Vivekananda. His name is familiar to many mainly owing to his memorable compilation: *Svāmi Sisya Samvada* (in Bengali) the English rendering of which appears in the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* under the title 'Conversations and Dialogues'. However, he authored several other works including a beautiful biography of Nag Mahashay and hymns, poems and essays which are not only rich in literary values but also filled with devotional fervour. There was a long-felt need to collect all these scattered writings into a single volume and also for an authentic biography of this beloved 'Disciple' of Swamiji. The book under review fulfils both these requirements.

The first 50 pages of the book contain a biographical sketch of Sri Sarat Chandra, written by no other than his fourth son, Prof. Dr. Shivapada Chakravarty, Head of the Department of Philosophy, Ravindra Bharati University.

Although prior to this work another biography of Sarat Chandra had been published in Bengali entitled *Śrī Vivekānanda Śiṣya Sarat Candra*, the present article contains many more incidents of his early life painstakingly collected by his youngest son Sri Brahmapada Chakravarty. Besides being authentic, the biography is so well-written that it has earned the following compliments from the pen of Swami Niramayanandaji: 'It is indeed a formidable task for a son to write a biography of his father. However, the write-up is successful only because the author has been able to transcend all personal feelings and has been guided by factual details'.

The second part of the book, which covers about five-sixths of the entire volume, contains all the available writings of Sri Sarat Chandra, excluding his three books *Svāmi Śiṣya Samvada*, *Sadhu Nag Mahasaya* and *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Pāncālī*. These compositions, most of which originally appeared in the *Udbodhan* between the first and the third decade of the present

century, have been classified into three main sections viz. Hymns, Poems and Prose. There are 24 hymns (in Sanskrit) and 13 songs mainly on Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji. These are followed by 19 poems and 20 prose-pieces. All the Sanskrit hymns have been provided with Bengali renderings so as to make them understandable to larger number of readers. The two Sanskrit letters of Swamiji written to Sarat Chandra have been included in the Appendix along with their Bengali translations. We hope the typographical errors will be eliminated in the next edition.

These compositions of Sarat Chandra reveal his extraordinary poetic talents, deep scriptural knowledge and, above all, sincere devotion to his Guru. While we wish a large circulation for the book, we feel an English translation of the entire volume will be warmly received by a wider public.

SWAMI MUKTINATHANANDA
Belur Math

NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVA PRATISHTHAN, CALCUTTA

REPORT FOR APRIL 1984 TO MARCH 1985

Begun in 1932 as a small antenatal and postnatal clinic with domiciliary maternity service and known then as the Ramakrishna Mission Shishumangal Pratishthan, the Seva Pratishthan is now a mammoth complex serving the public through the following four wings.

General Hospital: The total number of beds in the hospital was 550 and it had the following departments: General Medicine, General Surgery, Obstetrics, Gynaecology, Paediatric Medicine, Paediatric Surgery, Orthopaedics, Urology, Ophthalmology, E.N.T. Surgery, Dentistry and Dermatology. It has also special clinics for Anaesthesiology, Heart, Diabetes, Neurology, Nephrology, Psychiatry, Hearing and Speech Therapy, Physiotherapy, Post-partum (Family Welfare), Club-Foot, Glaucoma, Contact Lens, Immunization and Well Baby. The special needs of the departments are met by the departments of Radiology and Radiotherapy, Blood Bank, Infusion production, Pathology, Biochemistry,

Human Genetics. The Community Health Service Unit conducts clinics for both urban and rural patients.

All the departments are well equipped. Worth mentioning are the hospital's nine air-conditioned Operation Theatres, seven X-ray Plants, a Deep X-ray Unit, two Image Intensifiers, six Cardiac Monitors, two Dialysers, five E.C.G. Machines, four Temporary Pace Makers, one Pacing System Analyser, one Defibrillator, four Baby Incubators, an Oxygen Tent, a Bird Mark 8 Respirator, a Cardioscope, an E.M.G. Machine, an E.E.G. Machine and two Zeiss Surgery Microscopes. It has also an electrically operated hospital laundry.

The total number of patients treated in the departments during the year was: indoor, 18,888 (excluding 5,274 live births); outdoor, 2,14,584 (new cases) and 1,46,012 (old cases). The total number of operations conducted was 8,675. In the outdoor all patients were given free consultation facilities and a large number of them also got free treatment. In the indoor departments free and partly free treatment was given to 20.13% and 16.39% of the cases respectively.

School of Nursing: The school has a capacity to train 300 students. An entrant to the General Nursing-Midwifery Course lasting three years and six months is required to be a higher secondary school graduate between 17 and 28 years of age. Each student is given a stipend. After a course of three months an examination is held and successful candidates take part in an impressive 'Seva-Vrata Initiation' (capping ceremony) at which they receive their nursing caps and take vows of lifelong dedicated service to the sick and the suffering. All the 25 and 36 students who appeared in the final examinations in 1984 and 1985 respectively passed.

The Multipurpose Health Workers' course (revised Auxiliary Nursing Midwifery course) of 18 months duration requires candidates seeking admission to it to be in the age group of 17-25 and to have passed the Madhyamik or an equivalent examination. The procedure of selection is the same as in the general nursing course and each student is given a stipend. All the 54 students who appeared in the final examination in November 1984 passed.

The total number of students in the School of Nursing in the year was 161.

Vivekananda Institute of Medical Sciences: This service-oriented institute is recognized by the University of Calcutta as a unit of the University College of Medicine for postgraduate training and research in medicine. It is recognized also by the Indian Council of Medical Research as a research centre and by the Medical Council of India for compulsory rotatory training of fresh medical graduates, for postgraduate degree courses and for housemanship training. The courses in Child Health (DCH), Gynaecology and Obstetrics (DGO), Ophthalmology (DO) and Oto-Rhino-Laryngology (DLO): during the year under review, 23 students were on the rolls—8 for DCH, 7 for DGO, 4 for DO and 4 for DLO.

During 1984-85 seven doctors were doing their dissertation for postgraduate degrees—2 for MD in Gynaecology, 2 for MS in General Surgery, 1 for MD in Paediatrics, and 2 for MD in General Medicine. Moreover, senior doctors in various departments also conduct

research in different branches of medical science and the results are published in the Institute's half-yearly journal.

Community Health Service: As a part of the nursing training course, an area near the Seva Pratishthan and another near Sarisha in the 24 Parganas district of West Bengal, were selected for the training of nursing students. Besides collection of necessary data from these areas, the people there were given free immunization, hospital facilities and domiciliary treatment including antenatal and postnatal care to the new and expectant mothers, and regular health check-up of local school children.

The medical mobile unit attached to the Community Health Service covered 28 villages and 12 semi-urban areas with a population 46,000 in its rounds twice a week providing free treatment to some 450 patients each day, bringing the critically ill to the main hospital when necessary. It served 84,575 patients during 1984-85.

Present needs: To meet the increasing demands of the public and to render more efficient service to the patients, the Institution has undertaken the following essential development projects: (1) a multistoreyed building for Vivekananda Institute of Medical Sciences; (2) a Paediatric hospital with 150 beds; an emergency-ward of 20 beds; a post-operative ward of 10 beds; a psychiatric ward of 15 beds; a Plastic Surgery-cum-Burn Unit of 15 beds; a Physiotherapy department; and a building for the School of Nursing with a playground and staff quarters; (3) Endowment for the maintenance of a bed for the whole year: Rs. 2,00,000; for six months: Rs. 1,00,000 and for three months: Rs. 50,000. Anyone may create an endowment for a bed in his or her name by contributing the above amount.

The generous public are requested to donate liberally to help the Institution meet the above needs. Donations, which are exempt from Income Tax, may be sent as money orders, a/c payee cheques or bank drafts in the name of 'Ramakrishna Mission Seva Pratishthan' to the Secretary, at 99, Sarat Bose Road, Calcutta 700 026.

'He who knows the Supreme attains the highest.'—Tait. Upa II.1.1

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Para Bhakti or Wisdom

(Editorial)

We have seen what *Apara-bhakti* or *Saguna* worship is. It is but a step and a very necessary one towards the highest form of worship—absorption into the deity—in which alone can the mind find its final resting place. 'God', says the Yoga Vasishta, 'is neither Vishnu alone, nor Siva alone, nor any embodied being, for all bodies are merely compounds of the five elements; nor is God the mind; but He is the Gnana, the Self, beginningless and endless. Can He be the little things, body, mind and the like? As Brahmaghana is illimitable, actionless and without either beginning or end, such *gnana* alone is true and fit to be attained. But in the case of the ignorant devoid of wisdom, worship of forms alone is ordained to be the best. Just as wayfarers when they are unable to travel a long distance are told that their destination is but a call distant in order not to let their spirits droop, so persons devoid of wisdom are told to worship diverse forms at first though the wise say that they will not reach the Self merely through the worship of these various forms (*Saguna* worship).'

'Strong limbs may dare the rugged road which storms,
Soaring and perilous, the mountain's breast;
The weak must wind from slower ledge to ledge,
With many a place of rest.'

This will explain how Kabirdas one of the greatest of modern saints though by birth a Muhammadan and a worshipper of the abstract formless Alla, was initiated into the details of *Saguna* worship by God Himself as the story goes. Of course when one stops with *Vachakainkarya*, i.e., merely talking about religion, it matters not whether God is *Saguna*, with form, or *Nirguna*, without form but, when he enters into practical realization, it is very essential that the conception one has, should not be too far above his mental aptitude and capacity.

Gnana Yoga

(Class Lectures Delivered in America)

by

Swami Vivekananda

No. 1. SADHANAS OR PREPARATION

Do you remember the story of Solon and Croesus? The king said to the great sage that Asia Minor was a very happy place. And the sage asked him 'Who is the happiest man; I have not seen any one very happy?' 'Nonsense', said Croesus, 'I am the happiest man in the world'. 'Wait, sir, till the end of your life; don't be in a hurry', replied the sage and went away. In course of time that king was conquered by the Persians, and they ordered him to be burnt alive; the funeral pyre was prepared and when poor Croesus saw it, he cried aloud 'Solon! Solon!'. On being asked to whom he referred, he told his story and the Persian Emperor was kind enough to forgive him.

Such is the life story of each one of us; such is the tremendous power of nature over us. It repeatedly kicks us away, but still we pursue it with feverish excitement. We are always hoping against hope; this hope, this chimera maddens us; we are always hoping for happiness.